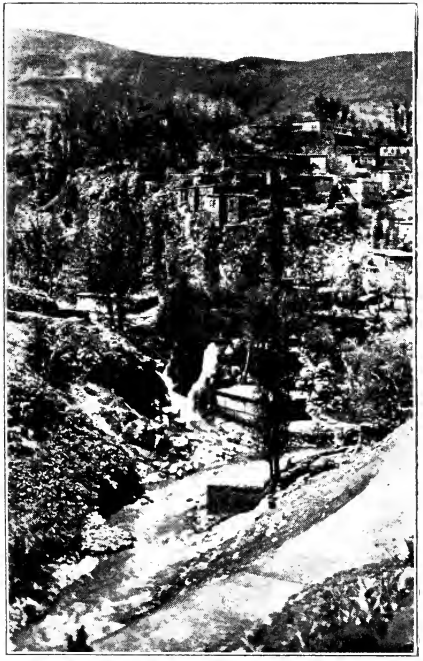
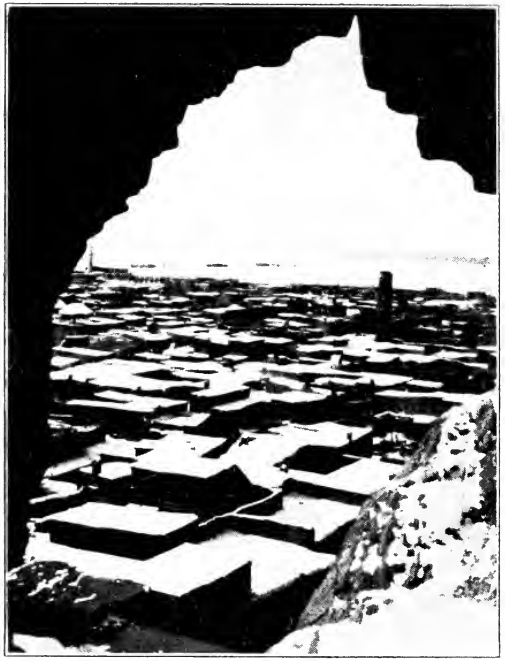
The Tragedy of BITLIS

Grace H. Knapp



A nook in Bitlis



Van—from the citadel

The Tragedy of Bitlis

By
GRACE H. KNAPP

Being Mainly the Narratives of
GRISELL M. McLAREN
AND
MYRTLE O. SHANE

ILLUSTRATED

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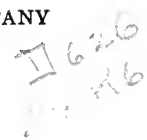

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To the memory of those dear to me,

Father, Mother, Brother, "Aunt Charlotte and Aunt Mary" Ely, who, in the name of Christ, spent their lives for the Armenians of Bitlis, this story of the sufferings and heroism of the people whom they loved and worked for is affectionately dedicated

Preface

AFTER their return to this country in October, 1917, Miss McLaren and Miss Shane each wrote an account of what occurred in Bitlis during the summer and early autumn of 1915. A harmony of the two narratives constitutes two-thirds of the present volume, entire paragraphs or pages being quoted word for word where this was feasible. Every incident is absolutely authentic, for the two American ladies have related without exaggeration what they have seen with their own eyes or experienced in their own persons.

I happened to be in Van when the war began and shared the fortunes of the Americans and Armenians there during the events briefly sketched in the chapter entitled "The Besieged City." But Bitlis was my birthplace and childhood's home, and I had taught there for nine years. So the scenes I have described are dear and familiar scenes and the "Ely residence,"

now looted, deserted and bare, my old home, once filled with relics of my parents' long life within its walls and endeared by a thousand ties of association. Pastor Khachig, Deegeen Lucentag, Deegeen Heghene, and Kevork Effendi were old and valued friends, together with many others whose names are not mentioned in these pages, and Miss Shane's pupils had once been mine. One of them a few weeks ago related to me the sequel of Miss McLaren's and Miss Shane's narrative and the story of her own strange romance.

The last chapter also describes the present condition in the Russian Caucasus of the refugees from the Van and Bitlis provinces and the wonderful work of relief and rehabilitation undertaken by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief.

GRACE H. KNAPP.

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Illustrations

I

BITLIS

SPRING in a little Armenian town in the heart of Kurdistan: hills, bleakly bare and brown the rest of the year, were faintly green with a sparse evanescent herbage; poplars lining streets and waterways were spires of pale green smoke bursting into beryl flame where the sun shot through; fruit trees behind high garden walls were masses of white bloom. Everywhere there was the sound and scent of running water, for the city was a city of streams and waterfalls and fountains, a city high, high up among the mountains, so enfolded within its hills, so swallowed up in deep narrow ravines that the whole of it could not be seen at once from the top of any of the surrounding peaks.

The most densely built part was like an amphitheater, flat-roofed stone houses climbing tier above tier half-way up one face of Water Tower Hill, a hill as triangular and steep as a pyramid and crowned by an old tower whose surmised purpose had given it its name.

In the center of the amphitheater was an enormous ancient fortress, picturesque with towers and battlements, rising cliff-like above a hive of low-roofed bazaars. Around its base and under half a score of arched stone bridges, rushed a mountain torrent that had entered the city by one narrow gorge and left it by another, the western side of which was covered with the orchards and gardens of squatter Kurds. A smaller stream leaped down a crevice in the hills to meet it here, turning perforce on its way primitive grindstones in a mill that looked like a feudal baron's stronghold atop its pinnacle of peninsulated rock.

The eastern side was a high bluff into the face of which was cut a highway leading from the center of the city to the south. The top of the bluff was a small plateau; near its northern edge the buildings of the American Mission looked down sheer two hundred feet into the well of the amphitheater with its mosques and minarets, fortress and bazaars.

The Merchant in Persia, visiting Bitlis early in the sixteenth century, found this fortress or castle occupied by a Kurdish prince owning only nominal allegiance to the Shah of Persia.

Tavernier a century later was impressed by the power of the Bey of Bitlis, "who acknowledged neither the Shah of Persia nor the Sultan of Turkey and was courted by both on account of the strategical value of his city barring the communications between Aleppo and Tabriz. He also resided in the castle approached by three successive drawbridges and could place in the field 20,000 to 25,000 horsemen besides a quantity of good infantry. In the eighteenth century the Padre Maurizio Garzoni speaks of the dynasty of Bitlis as one of the five considerable principalities which divided between them the Kurdistan of his day. The last of this old order of princes at Bitlis was a man of many-sided and remarkable character, whose romantic history one peruses with breathless excitement in the dry reports and correspondence of Consul Brant, the eye and ear of the famous Stratford Canning. After a life of chequered fortune and fox-like resistance to the Turkish power he was finally overwhelmed by the operations of Reshid Pasha and taken a prisoner to Constantinople in 1849."[1]

This prince, Sherif Bey, built a fortified castle

[1] H. F. B. Lynch, "Armenia," Vol. II, Chap. VI.

long ago razed to the ground, on an eminence, still bearing his name, which links the small plateau to Water Tower Hill.

Once since the rule of Turkish pashas began have the Kurds of the region attempted to regain their old power. In the spring of 1914 they marched into the city, a harlequin mob in their gay native costumes, and armed chiefly with short swords, scimitars and knives. Chanting weirdly, they took up a position on Sherif Bey's Hill in full view of the government buildings and within direct range of fire from the barracks. They did not fear the enemy's bullets, for these would be warded off by the magic power of their religious leaders, the sheikhs.

The machine guns startled them and they scurried to cover in an old Armenian church, from which for a while they returned the fire with a few old muskets. But when cannon-balls began to demolish the walls of their shelter and it was discovered that the invulnerable sheikhs had deserted them and were in hiding they fled in utter rout.

More than a year had passed since then and Turkey had for months been at war with Russia, but the little town was quiet and peaceful this

bright May morning. Why not? It had known such terrible massacres during the past quarter century that a war with a foe from without, a war in which the Armenians themselves were fighting and proving their bravery and loyalty, seemed by comparison a thing not to be so greatly feared. And the governor of the province had thus far proved himself able to keep in order the turbulent elements within his vilayet. So there seemed no good reason why three of the small circle of American missionaries should not now take their furloughs which were due and for which a more convenient season might never occur. Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Maynard had worked for seven years in Bitlis, seven strenuous years filled with difficult problems, anxieties, sorrows, which only calm good judgment, devotedness and courage such as theirs could face and endure; they greatly needed now a year at home. With them was leaving Miss Mary D. Uline, who had begun her missionary life in Erzerum but who had taught for four years in the Mt. Holyoke Seminary of Bitlis and had been its principal for two years.

It was the Armenian Ascension Day, and the streets were filled with people in gala attire.

Hundreds of Armenian friends "set the travellers on the road," according to their custom. After these turned back, Miss Ely, Miss Shane, Mr. Knapp and the Armenian pastor and head teacher of the boys' school prepared a farewell picnic lunch in a shaded spot by the side of the road within sight and sound of the river. With hopeful prophecies concerning the future, with laughter and with jest, the members of the little group tried to hide from each other the doubts, misgivings and sense of loss with which the approaching separation filled their hearts.

Yet they did not dream that at this very moment their American friends of the nearest sister mission, ninety miles away across Lake Van, were in a besieged city, cut off utterly from communication with the outside world; a besieged city that had held out gallantly against desperate odds for nearly four weeks but had now lost all hope and was fighting grimly but to put off a little longer the inevitable end.

II

THE BESIEGED CITY

DJEVDET BEY, the Governor-General of Van, brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, Minister of War, had planned for April 19, 1915, a general massacre of his Armenian subjects. On that day soldiers and Kurds, in some instances taking cannon with them, attacked the smaller towns and the villages of the province, and met with little or no resistance because most of the able-bodied men had been drafted into the Sultan's army and those who were left had very little ammunition. Fifty-five thousand men, women and children were slaughtered; thousands, wounded, managed to escape and flee to the capital, while their homes were looted and burned behind them.

In the city of Van itself Djevdet Bey's plans met with an unexpected check. He had endeavoured by exorbitant demands and by acts of treachery to incite the Armenians to "rebel-

lion" which would justify putting them to death. But the Armenians were exceedingly careful not to precipitate trouble by any overt act of their own, which, they very well knew, would be made an excuse for massacres all over the Empire. At the same time they determined to put up a fight in case of attack, and they discovered that lines of entrenchment were being secretly drawn around the Armenian quarter.

This Armenian quarter was about a mile square and was separated by a Turkish quarter from the business section in the old walled city two miles distant. In the walled city was the famous Castle Rock, a citadel that could protect—or threaten—the bazaars and dwellings huddled around its base.

Most of the Armenian men had enlisted or had been drafted into the army. Between twelve and fifteen hundred young men were left, trained riflemen, though they possessed but three hundred rifles among them. They manned and barricaded, secretly, positions all around the Armenian quarter, then—waited. "If the Armenians fire one shot," Djevdet Bey had told the Americans, "I will destroy the city utterly, leaving not one child as high as my knee."

The Armenians did not fire that first shot. Turkish soldiers fired it, and within an hour the Armenian quarter, with its thirty thousand inhabitants, was in a state of siege.

At the same time the Armenians in the walled city were put on the defensive. Cannon on Castle Rock were fired down upon their sun-dried brick houses, wrecking the upper stories. Although there were only thirty fighting men here they held out bravely to the very end.

The story of the siege of Van, together with the events that preceded and followed, is fully told in Dr. C. D. Ussher's "An American Physician in Turkey."[1] It is very briefly related here on account of Miss Grisell McLaren's connection with the tragedy of Van and the tragedy of Bitlis.

When Turkey entered the war in the autumn of 1914, a military hospital was opened on the outskirts of the city about a mile from the American premises. The Governor asked the missionaries to send one of their number to help in this hospital, and Miss McLaren was chosen.

Not far from the American premises was an

[1] Ambassador Morgenthau also devotes considerable space to it in his book.

Armenian orphanage under the management of a Swiss gentleman, Herr Sporri, his wife and daughter, and three German ladies. Hundreds of the orphans of the 1895-96 massacres had been taken care of for some years by the American missionaries. Later these Germans had come in, and it had been thought best in order not to duplicate and waste effort to turn over all of the remaining orphans to their care. Fräulein Kleiss (Schwester Marthe, or Sister Martha as we called her), was also asked to help and consented to do so. The two ladies worked during the day at the hospital, returning at night. Some of their pre-siege experiences are related by Miss McLaren in the following chapter.

Although the Americans did not know that Djevdet Bey was planning a massacre, it was quite evident on April 17th that there was going to be serious trouble of some sort, so when he asked Sister Martha and Miss McLaren to stay at the hospital night and day for ten days, they understood there was to be no going and coming and they must either accede to his request or stay at home for that length of time. The Armenian workers begged them not to leave·

their presence might save these men from death. The thought of the way in which the poor patients would be neglected during their absence also strongly influenced them and they decided to remain at their post. But throughout the siege they held no communication with their associates nor did the Vali vouchsafe any information to the Americans concerning Miss McLaren's well-being, although during the early part of the siege there was occasional communication between him and their official representative, the Italian consular agent.

Djevdet Bey, indeed, in spite of the fact that hitherto he had had most friendly relations with the missionaries, in spite of the fact that scores of Turkish soldiers had been cared for in their Red Cross hospital and that he was assured they were maintaining an attitude of strict neutrality—which as Americans they were bound to do —was enraged by their humanitarian efforts in behalf of the non-combatants. They housed six thousand refugees on their own premises, organized a city government and a system of food distribution, and cared for the sick and wounded. Epidemics raged, for over ten thousand villagers escaped to the city, provisions ran very low, and

crowding, exposure and privation brought the usual consequences in their train. Djevdet Bey threatened to bombard the American premises and he fulfilled his threat on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth days of the siege. Shells entered every building in the compound.

This proved to be a burst of foiled spite, however, for in the afternoon and evening of the 15th of May the Turkish troops were withdrawn from the city and it was soon discovered that practically its entire Turkish population had already fled in boats across the lake to Bitlis.

The Americans hastened the next morning to the military hospital only to find that Miss McLaren and Sister Martha had been sent with their patients to Bitlis four days earlier.

On the 18th the Russians, whose approach had put to flight the Turks, entered the city.

III

AN AMERICAN WOMAN IN A TURKISH HOSPITAL

(*Miss McLaren's Story*)

"THE Van hospital was used to serve the portion of the Ottoman army that was fighting against the Russians between Van and the Persian border. Of those who reached the hospital many were wounded, many had feet or hands frozen by lying day and night in the snow and many others were ill from exposure and improper food and shelter. There was no well-organized Red Cross or Red Crescent ambulance service—in fact, there were scarcely any roads over which four-wheeled vehicles could have travelled even if there had been any such vehicles available. The patients were cared for first in the field hospitals, which were usually in dark, dirty stables, and from these a few at a time were sent to the central hospital at Van. They had to come on the backs of donkeys, horses, or even oxen. Any who were unable to sit up and hold on were

bound, face down, on the back of the animal. Often when they arrived some poor fellows would be hanging over the side head down, sometimes with their heads between the animal's front feet. No nurses were ever sent with such a caravan, and the muleteers did not care what happened. Such a journey required from four to ten days, and stops were made each night in a village, where the men had to lie without beds on some earthen floor. Lucky they were if they had a roof over their heads.

"Where the roads were good ox-carts were used, but only for the worst cases, and the poor men had to lie for days on these, clad only in miserable rags, sometimes with a little hay under them and an overcoat for covering, sometimes with nothing as protection, either below or above. On arrival the dead had to be removed first before the living could be gotten at, and more of these ox-cart passengers were sent to the morgue than to the hospital. Few of those who were living when they arrived recovered.

"At first we wondered why we received so few heavily wounded men, but our wondering soon ceased when we heard the patients tell of

how their companions were left dead or dying by the roadside. Enver Pasha is credited with having said that Turkish soldiers had no identification cards or discs at the beginning of the war because the dead Turk is of no use to the Turkish Government. The severely wounded soldier was often left to die uncared for on the battle-field or by the roadside, probably because he could be of no further use to the government and surgical supplies were too precious to waste on such.

"During the early weeks of the war our patients were anxious to be made 'tabourdji' (discharged and returned to the front). They were all eagerness to fight to help their allies, the Germans. One young officer said, 'No matter what we sacrifice, it will still be little when we think of what we owe to Germany.' A few weeks later a companion, who had heard this remark, was in the operating room watching as the surgeon amputated the foot of a poor fellow who had already lost one leg and would lose a hand also. He said, 'May the curse of God rest upon the man who began this war, whether he is in London or Berlin or wherever he is.' We soon found that men were removing their

bandages, and doing things to get their wounds infected and thus delay their departure from the hospital. The spirit of loyalty to their allies had changed, except in a few cases, to bitter hate, and more than one German officer has said to me, 'If the war goes against Germany the Turks will rise up and kill every German in the Turkish Empire.'

"The hospital was a large, new building, with comfortable accommodations for 200 patients. The beds were of iron, each provided with one mattress of straw and one of cotton, which soon grew lumpy and hard as brick. Sheets were too narrow and short to protect the mattresses; pillows were used for months at a time without cleansing; there was not enough clothing to keep the patients clean and no bathing facilities —men were put to bed in the condition in which they came off the road; they were covered with vermin and the work in the laundry was so poorly done it was not safe to handle the garments that had been washed.

"Sister Martha and I made up our minds that there must be some radical changes in the management of affairs or we could not work. A hospital committee was formed of prominent

Turks and foreigners. For a few days members of this committee haunted the place, holding conferences with the staff, finding out what was needed and promising to have everything complete in a very short time. Two members were to spend several hours each day going about the wards, watching the dressing of wounds and attending operations. They began bravely, but it was really funny to see how quickly they sought the open air after a visit to a ward. They 'did not like the smell,' they said, and left. The life of this committee of high ideals was painfully short, but before it went out we were given an adequate supply of the most necessary things, and a small room was fitted up for bathing, each patient being allowed one pail of water and one small piece of poor soap.

"The officials were very free with their hands or whips, maintaining that a common soldier would do his duty only through fear of physical suffering. Patients, too, who writhed when the doctor cruelly probed a wound or used a knife freely, were often struck to make them keep still. We put a stop to the beating of servants, and after one patient died, from shock apparently, after undergoing a very painful operation

without anesthetic, dressings and operations were more humanely done.

"Sister Martha was a splendidly trained nurse, with several years of experience in German hospitals and clinics. She had all the qualities of a German general and ordered everybody about from the head doctor to the humblest nurse. Inferiors almost worshipped her, and to them her word was law, but men who, because of their military rank, should have been managing affairs, resented being ordered about by a woman. Jokingly they called her 'Bin bashi (Major) Martha.' However, they realized that the things she demanded were reasonable and necessary for the good of the work.

"In spite of seemingly insurmountable difficulties, in a short time there was a marked change in the comfort and efficiency of the hospital. The patients could not find words to express their gratitude, and it was not uncommon to hear an old patient telling a new one in regard to one or the other of us that there was 'no better doctor in the whole country than she.' I knew little about nursing, but I kept the nurses, and even the doctors sometimes, attending to business, and I administered to the

poor men generous doses of cheer and encouragement which I am sure often did them more good than the stuff the doctors prescribed without knowing what was the matter with them. The medicines ordered were given or not, according to the temper of the head druggist, who altered prescriptions to suit himself. Some days no medicines were given at all because there was no one in the drug room who had skill or inclination to prepare them.

"One of the duties I enjoyed most was choosing patients to be sent to the American hospital. Dr. Ussher had Red Cross funds for caring for a certain number of soldiers in his hospital and I had to see that the number was kept filled up. Sister Martha and I usually chose the ones who, we thought, had little chance of recovery if they remained where they were. The doctors were always glad to get rid of troublesome cases.

"Every evening I went to see how the men liked their new quarters. After a real bath, clean bed, clean clothes, they looked like different beings. As soon as I appeared all would begin to talk at once. 'We never knew there was such a place as this on earth. This is heaven. Just look at us, we are clean and we

have had enough to eat to-day. They give us all we want, and it is so good! God grant you life for your kindness to us!'

"We had been told at the beginning that we must make no attempt to change the religion of the Moslem patients, but for a long time we were allowed to give out portions of Scripture to them to read. These were very eagerly sought for, and the few who could read were kept busy reading aloud to the others. The doctor who had permitted this left for the front after a time and the next morning the superintendent of the hospital collected all the books and tracts and would not allow us to give others. The men often asked us what salary we were receiving from the government for our services, and they could not comprehend why we should be working for nothing for the Turkish Government. This gave us the opportunity we sought of telling them of the love of Christ, and that we were serving them because of that love."

IV

DURING THE SIEGE

"WHEN, in compliance with Djevdet Bey's request, we decided, April 17th, to stay both night and day at the hospital for a time, we were given very comfortable quarters, a large, sunny room in a house next the hospital. The superintendent was obliged to furnish rugs from his own home and I believe some of the furniture was his. A soldier was assigned to wait on us, which he did very nicely, when he was not away burying his father-in-law or attending to some other business. Of food we did not have a great variety—meat, milk and cooking butter in abundance, and occasionally other things. We had to eat the hospital bread, there was no other—dark, half-baked stuff full of straw and grit. Our enjoyment of it did not increase when we saw it thrown upon the ground in dirty sacks from the same wagon in which the bodies of the dead

soldiers were taken to the graveyard. We fried it and ate it and tried to forget. We knew that Djevdet Bey was anxious to have us made as comfortable as possible, but we did not know until it was too late that he occasionally sent us dainties for our table. The chief doctor ate them and told us afterwards what a good dinner he had had.

"The siege of Van began on the 20th of April, 1915, early in the morning. We could hear the cracking of the rifles, seemingly from every direction, and the booming of the cannon as they fired from the old city 'Castle' down onto the houses in the walled city in a vain effort to destroy them. The singing of the bullets at night as they came near our quarters forced us to abandon our beds near the windows and sleep on the floor. During the first day or two we found it hard to work or to rest. We pictured our Armenian friends as being driven from their homes and cruelly murdered without being able to defend themselves. Then an Armenian doctor, who was being held at the hospital as a prisoner, told us how the Armenians had prepared themselves for what they knew must come before long. Later the

wounded Turkish soldiers who were brought to the hospital often said, ' This is no way to fight. We can do nothing against these Armenians. They fight from behind the walls of their houses where we cannot see them and we don't know where to shoot. We are in plain sight in the streets and they shoot us down.' Upon that we felt better.

" During the siege we received a call or two from a man calling himself a German officer. As I remember him, he wore the uniform of a Turkish captain. He told us that he was a native of Venezuela, had been in Alaska and had been a cowboy on our own Western plains. He had also been to school in Germany and claimed to have a commission in the German army. One day he sent a note to Sister Martha, who immediately said, ' This settles it. He is not a German officer, for no man who writes German like this would ever receive a commission in our army.'

" From his own story we knew that he directed the bombardment of the walled city, but he acknowledged that it had not been a very successful piece of work.

" ' The cannon-balls go through the thick

mud walls of the houses without destroying them, and the Armenians are grateful to us for having made another opening for them to shoot us through.' His contempt for the Turks was great, and we could not keep from laughing as he told how the men went about carrying explosives in their arms and lighted cigarettes in their mouths. Some of the awful wrecks of men we saw who had been blown up by their own cannon or ammunition proved that the common soldiers did not fully understand the nature of the materials with which they had to deal.

"Captain de Nogales, as he called himself, was evidently a 'soldier of fortune,' adding to his already varied experiences by helping the Turks exterminate the Armenians. There was a large mirror in the room. At the close of each call the captain would bid us good-bye with a handshake and a low bow, then straighten up, click his heels in true German fashion, salute his own reflection in the mirror, turn, bow to us again and march out. His stay in Van was short, and then he was off in search of new adventures.

"The one spring-wagon was kept busy bringing the wounded to the hospital and Sister

Martha and I were often kept in the operating room until nine or ten at night without any supper, working with the Armenian surgeon on the men who needed immediate operations. The Turkish doctor, who was supposed to be at the head of things, usually left before dark. Sister Martha never thought about herself, but always and only how she could relieve the sufferings of others, and often she was so weak that she could scarcely climb the stairs to our room. Sometimes she was in such great pain that she would sink to the floor unable to stand up. No one besides myself knew of the trouble that caused this suffering, and she never allowed it to interfere with her work.

"The Turks were furious against the Armenians, and always glad to find some new proof of their 'treachery.' The doctors said, 'See what kind of men your Armenians are' when one or two were brought in wounded by dum-dum, or by poisoned bullets. They stopped talking when we told them that each one of the men thus wounded had been shot by mistake by Turkish soldiers.

"Djevdet Bey's 'ten days' passed, and still another ten, and the end seemed no nearer than

at the first. Suddenly there began the hurried transfer of patients across the lake to Bitlis. We were told that this was only to make room for other patients, but before many days they said that the hospital was to be abandoned, and asked Sister Martha and me if we would go to Bitlis to help there. Before making our decision we called on the Governor, who expressed deep appreciation of all we had done and a desire that we might see fit to continue our services in Bitlis. However, he promised to do all in his power to get us safely through to the Armenian lines if we wished, where a white flag would insure safe conduct to our homes. One of the officials suggested that we would be obliged to sign a paper to the effect that we went at our own desire, thus absolving the Turkish Government from all responsibility in case anything happened to us. The remark helped us to decide that it was best to go with the patients. On our return to the hospital this decision was strengthened by the Armenian workers who came and begged us again not to leave them or they would all be killed."

V

ACROSS THE LAKE TO BITLIS

"I SEEM to be unable to recall dates, but I know we left Van on a Thursday or Friday night about the middle of May, 1915. We had very little baggage—only one change of clothing and a little bedding. Our food consisted mostly of a lot of hospital bread fried. We left the hospital in the ambulance and had to go a roundabout way to get to the place where the boats were waiting in order to avoid passing too near the city gate, where the enemy might be lying in wait. It was dark as Egypt and we had to walk a long way through the sand on the lake shore before we finally found the boats. By the aid of a feeble lantern we clambered up one gangplank across a sailboat and down another narrow, springy board onto the deck of the little gasoline launch that was to carry us across the lake.

"Although we were told that they had been

waiting only for us, it was after two o'clock in the morning before we were under way. What caused the delay we never knew, but the captain had to go several times to consult with the Governor, who lived some distance away.

"Djevdet Bey had given written orders that no one was to be carried on the motor-boat except the two Schwesters and the two doctors, but we found the cabin occupied by a Turkish family who also had private permission from the Governor to go with us and naturally they intended to avail themselves of it. Sister Martha and I were invited to share the cabin with them, but as there seemed to be not even standing room inside we declined as politely as possible. But our bedding was on one of the sailboats, it was bitterly cold and we did not look forward with any enthusiasm to a night on deck sailing across Lake Van. Finally the captain gave us his cabin. It was a tiny place with wooden benches a foot wide on three sides and not long enough to let one stretch out. However, we managed to get a little sleep, and at daylight we were on deck again. The sea was calm and beautiful and as a good breeze was blowing, the eight large sailboats with us (five

filled with hospital patients and three with Turkish families fleeing from the oncoming Russians) went along at a good pace.

"Later our boat stopped at an island on which there was a large Armenian monastery. We climbed the hill eagerly with visions of a good breakfast of eggs and milk and bread, which the priests always willingly prepared for travellers stopping there. We had difficulty in gaining admission into the building, which was a most unusual experience; when we got in we found two aged priests who seemed dazed and either unable or unwilling to talk, and who refused to give us anything to eat. At last we gathered that the day before a lot of Turkish soldiers had come to the island, killed one or more of the priests and some of the orphan boys and carried off all the sheep and chickens and everything eatable in the place. In the church we found everything overturned. Vestments and other articles used in the church services were scattered about on the floor, torn, broken and destroyed. Silver crosses had been carried away, every scrap of silver or gold had been torn off the mitres and other articles; not one thing of value was to be found anywhere.

"As we sorrowfully walked back to the boat, the captain, who was furious at the ruin we had seen, told me that on his last trip he had carried orders from Djevdet Bey to the soldiers that the island and its inhabitants were to be left unmolested. Evidently this was one of the orders of which we heard more later, issued with the additional information that the recipient was free to use his own judgment about obeying it.

"The morning was not very far advanced when the wind died down entirely, a very common occurrence on Lake Van, and the sailboats were unable to go on. Leaving the sails unfurled to catch any little breeze that might come along, the sailors plied the heavy, clumsy oars in a vain attempt to reach Tadvan, the seaport of Bitlis, before night. Had it not been for the motor-boat the poor men would have had to go hungry all day, as all the bread for the trip was on one boat. We went back and forth distributing bread, and then stopped the motor, for strict orders had been given the captain that he was to remain with the sailboats until they reached their destination. Not a drop of water had been provided for the journey, and as the

sun grew hotter the cries of the men that they would die of thirst grew more and more insistent. Finally the captain declared he could stand it no longer, and, orders or no orders, he was going for water. In a short time we reached Tadvan, where he gathered up all the jugs he could find in the town, filled them, and, leaving us on shore, returned to the sailboats and their passengers.

"Tadvan was full of soldiers, some of them displaying and mocking at the crosses and other dedicated things they had taken from the island monastery. The villagers were frightened and crowded around us. We tried to calm them by saying that the government had assured us that there would be no massacres in the Bitlis province. Armenians, like the Van Armenians, who, according to official report, had rebelled, must be punished, but those who were loyal to the government had nothing to fear. Some of the people had escaped from near-by villages in the Van province and their minds were full of the horrors through which they had lived.

"The sailboats anchored at a village not far from Tadvan. We went over there the next day to do what we could for our patients while

waiting for ox-carts to take us to Bitlis. We took up our abode in one end of a large stable, billeted our men in village homes and fixed up a place out-of-doors for dressing wounds. One man was found whose arm had to be amputated at once. We contrived a table just inside the stable door from the two boxes which contained instruments and other supplies. The man was not very tall, but in order that his head might rest on the 'table,' his legs had to hang over the other end. The operation was successful.

"During the day Sister Martha and I were startled by a strange sound that seemed to come from behind a hill some distance away, and drew nearer and nearer. Then a crowd of fifty or more people appeared approaching the village, half chanting, half wailing, in the peculiar way Armenians have of showing grief and telling their troubles. When they saw soldiers about they left the road, sat down on the hillside and, rocking back and forth, and wringing their hands, they repeated over and over, after the manner of their race, the story of the awful massacre that had taken place in their village the day before. Wives and mothers told how their little babies had been killed and their

bodies thrown into the lake and others had been thrown in alive, and how their attractive brides and daughters had been carried off by the Kurds. When they were calm enough to speak coherently they said that the attacking party had not been one of Turkish soldiers but of Kurds who claimed to have come from the Erzerum region and who said that the Russians had carried off their sheep and cattle, and so they were making good their losses by carrying away the property of the Armenians. Russians and Armenians were both Christians, so it was all the same.

"There was but one man in this group of survivors, and he was badly wounded, as were most of the women and some of the children. After having their wounds dressed they went on their way again towards Bitlis, where they expected to complain to the government and demand protection and redress. They had no idea that the affair had been ordered by the government.

"We were obliged to spend several days in this village. One day we saw a small party of Kurds evidently reconnoitering above the place. A soldier was sent out to inquire their business, and then they went back in the direction from

which they had come. They had come to raid this village also, but postponed it on account of our presence. They did not go far away, for we were hardly out of sight on our return to Tadvan before they began their work of murder and destruction.

"Another night had to be passed in Tadvan. The people were even more terror stricken than before, and several crowded into the stable where we spent the night, hoping for greater protection. All night long we heard shooting and were assured that it was only the soldiers fighting to protect the Christian villagers from attacking parties of Kurds.

"Our caravan during the last stage of our journey to Bitlis consisted of several ox-carts loaded as heavily as possible with boxes and bedding, a patient or two on top, the weakest bound on. It was fearful to watch the carts in front of us lurching this way and that as the wheels went over big stones or into ruts in the road. The poor fellows with no strength to help themselves cried out in fear. We were powerless to help matters.

"We kept passing groups of mounted Kurds going to or returning from their work of de-

struction. Upon the hillsides groups of men were making trenches. At the entrance to the city we were stopped and taken to a police station, where a very careful account was recorded of each one. Sister Martha and I were registered as 'German doctors.' The question of how to dispose of us properly seemed to be an embarrassing one until I announced that I was an American and we expected to be cared for at the American mission.

"We had sent a telegram the day before from Tadvan telling of our coming, and Miss Ely and Mr. Knapp had ridden out in the afternoon to meet us. Naturally our failure to appear had caused some little anxiety, and when we did arrive, wet, hungry and exhausted, we received a hearty welcome. No one who has not been through a similar experience could possibly imagine what it meant to us to be once more in a quiet Christian home, eating a well-cooked, nicely served dinner after four weeks of constant association with Turkish soldiers and officers."

VI

TWELVE THOUSAND REFUGEES IN BITLIS

MISS McLAREN and Sister Martha arrived in Bitlis five days after the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Maynard and Miss Uline. In that short interval deportations and massacres had begun in the province, and Armenians, mostly women and children, driven from their homes by Kurds acting under the orders of the government, began pouring into the city. About seven hundred took refuge on the American premises.

The compound was rather small and surrounded by a high stone wall with gabled top. A great arched gateway opened upon the street; its huge, double-leaved wooden doors were closed at night, barred with four heavy iron bars and bolted with a wooden beam about six inches square. This form of safeguarding homes or schools was common throughout the city, and windows everywhere were cross-barred with inch-thick iron rods.

There were four buildings in this enclosure; the large church, the girls' schoolhouse, the boys' schoolhouse and the Maynards' residence, occupied after their departure by Mr. Knapp. Unfortunately the other missionary residence, though very near the compound, was separated from it by the right of way of a Turkish neighbour so that its occupants had to pass through the public street to schools, church and the home of their associates, a procedure most inconvenient and even unsafe in times of political unrest.

This house had belonged to Rev. and Mrs. George C. Knapp, who had been missionary pioneers in Bitlis, and it had also been the home of Miss Charlotte Ely for the greater part of the forty-seven years she had spent in this city. With her lived Miss Myrtle O. Shane, now in charge of the girls' school, and Miss McLaren and Sister Martha became her guests.

Reports came in every day of the destruction of this village and that in the neighbourhood of Bitlis. The Governor, when appealed to by the missionaries, pretended to be greatly troubled by all this lawlessness, which he attributed to a noted Kurdish brigand, and declared he was

making every effort to put an end to it. Yet crowds of old men, women and children continued to flee terror-stricken to Bitlis until there were about 12,000 in the city. Some were cared for in an Armenian church, and the chief priest of the city had relief funds which he distributed every day. Eight thousand were allotted to the Americans; Mr. Knapp soon used up what relief funds he had and telegraphed Constantinople for more. Even when this was received there was only enough to allow each person a very small sum daily, barely enough to keep her alive. Many of these refugees were wounded; one little fellow six or seven years old had four or five wounds, some penetrating the lungs, made by a dagger in the hand of a Moslem; a little girl had her arm shattered by a Turkish bullet—instances could be many times multiplied. The superintendent of the hospital gave the necessary supplies for treating these wounded people and a place to house them. The "women's hospital" was known to the police and so was never molested, and the number of poor creatures who sought refuge and healing increased until larger quarters had to be found.

The wounded Turks brought from Van had

been put into an old monastery outside the city, but the arrangement did not prove satisfactory; the monastery was turned into a convalescent home and the surgical cases brought into Armenian houses near the mission premises, from which the owners were ejected. The chief doctor sent orders that the Protestant church was to be turned over to the hospital authorities at once. Mr. Knapp refused to do this without a written request from the Vali. Later, the missionaries invited the doctor to an afternoon tea at the Ely residence, and when some of Miss Ely's delicious cake had made him relax a little from his unfriendly attitude, they formally offered him the use of the church for hospital purposes. Miss McLaren and Sister Martha continued to work among these patients as they had in Van.

Early in June the refugees were gathered up and driven through the streets by gendarmes. From the bluff overlooking the southern road great numbers of them could be seen herded together in readiness to be sent south.

"These ignorant village Armenians are not fit to live—they ought to die," said a Turkish doctor to Mr. Knapp in the presence of all the

Americans. And very soon reports were brought back by women and children who escaped that the refugees were being killed by Kurds on the road. One woman, fingers shot off and a gash on her face, said that the gendarmes had told the party in which she was taken that at a certain point farther on the Kurds would attack them. This was not a warning, for those who tried to escape were shot down. Mr. Knapp and the native pastor asked the Vali to allow these deported people to go by the Moush road to avoid Kurdish attacks. He replied that the Moush region was quiet and must remain so.

There was an epidemic of typhus. Five or six of the refugees on the mission premises died every day; at first their bodies were buried in a garden across the street, but later this was not permitted and they had to be buried in the mission compound. In digging these graves the bones were unearthed of many who had lost their lives in the massacre of 1895 and who had been buried here to keep at least their dead bodies inviolate from their murderers.

VII

MASSACRE OF THE MEN

THE government officials constantly assured the Americans that only the villages near the border were being evacuated and that no harm would come to any one in the city.

The Russians were reported to be drawing nearer every day; the authorities had made their preparations to set fire to the principal buildings and leave on short notice. A band of Kurds from Motgan, notorious as men who had always defied the government, came to the city one day, and when they left each was equipped with a modern rifle and plenty of ammunition.

Neither the Americans nor the Armenians then suspected a massacre ordered by the government, but they had no doubts as to what the Motgan Kurds would do as soon as the garrison should be withdrawn. Armenians begged to be allowed to come to the American premises for protection. A general permission to do so

would inevitably have created a panic and precipitated trouble with the authorities, but the families of the pastor and teachers and a few others were allowed to come quietly and others were promised admittance in case of actual danger. The condition was made that all fire-arms of those admitted should be turned over to Mr. Knapp.

On June 22d Rev. Khachig Vartanian, who had been pastor of the Protestant church and official representative of the Protestant community before the government for many years, one of the most influential and deeply respected citizens of Bitlis, was seized and imprisoned while on his way to the Vali on behalf of some refugees.

On June 23d the American premises were surrounded by armed soldiers and police. Mr. Knapp was in the Maynard house, now his own residence, and the four ladies in Miss Ely's house. Feeling that if anything was going to happen her place was in the girls' school, Miss Shane started to go there, but the guard at the gate leading to the street forced her to return at the point of a gun.

Officers and soldiers, armed to the teeth as if

they were after a band of robbers instead of a few law-abiding Armenians, now appeared, sought out and arrested every man and every boy over ten years of age on the mission premises and lined them up in the school-yard, guarded by gendarmes as if they were criminals. One soldier was stationed on the roof opposite, where he kept jumping about like a monkey, his gun constantly pointed at the group.

Resistance would have been worse than useless; the possession and use of firearms would have sealed the fate not only of the men but of the women and children. The latter crowded around their husbands, brothers and fathers, clinging to them and crying bitterly.

"Why do you make such a fuss? They are only going to be examined about something. Of course they are all innocent and will soon be back," said the soldiers.

Mr. Knapp hurried to the Vali, taking Sister Martha with him in the hope that a German might get at the true meaning of the affair and perhaps secure the men's release. The Vali received them in his usual polite way, listened quietly to their story and request and then said that the government knew that letters from the

enemy in Van had been received by some Armenian or Armenians in Bitlis and the object of arresting all the men was to discover who these recipients were. When found, they would be treated as traitors, while all others would be set free as soon as their innocence was established. No resistance would be tolerated; if any were attempted it would put in immediate danger all on the premises.

The men were marched off to prison. A good old man, who had taught in the school for many years, comforted his terrified pupils:

"Do not be afraid; they are persecuting us for our religion, but we shall remain faithful to Christ." A few boys were sent back as too young.

Throughout the city men and boys were arrested, on the street, in their shops, in their homes. If a man resisted he was killed. Those who hid themselves in their houses and refused to come out were burned with their families.

On one occasion a man was discovered to be hiding in a house, part of which was visible from the windows of the girls' school. It was as if hounds had scented a fox. Turks ran yelping from all directions. Some climbed upon the flat

roof and leaned over with their guns pointing downward in order to have a good chance at him should he try to escape. The commotion lasted about two hours, but Miss Shane, who saw its beginning, did not see its end.

In one house where there was a large household, many sons living with their families in their father's home, according to the patriarchal custom of the country, there were ten guns which were used with telling effect against the police.

It was finally fired from the inside and some of its inmates burned. The rest retired to the cellar, where they had stored provisions and water for a siege. The police soon found out that there were people there still alive and began to try to get them out. Miss McLaren, happening to pass at the time, saw a lot of soldiers on the street with their guns pointed towards the building. Police with beams were trying to batter down the cellar walls, always keeping out of range from the windows. In the evening two badly wounded little boys were brought from that house to Sister Martha. The men had been obliged to surrender at last. The father, a lawyer who had been in the service of the gov-

ernment many years, was brought from the prison to view the remains of his home and to see what it meant for a subject to defy his government.

This was the strongest resistance to arrest in the city. In most cases the men went quietly, trusting that they would soon be released. The government succeeded perfectly in deceiving the people with its assurances. The Americans also were more than once misled by its promises.

All the Armenian nurses, druggists and orderlies in the hospital were also taken. It mattered not that they were the most intelligent and faithful helpers, and that there was no one left to prepare medicines for the Turkish patients—all had to go.

The first victim was a young man employed in the military hospital, a graduate of Euphrates College, Harpoot. He had tried to give his friends at home some idea of the situation in Bitlis by telling about the swarms of locusts that had visited the province shortly before. His allusion was understood by the censor, he was arrested, marched off under guard, and a Kurdish neighbour told the Americans that he was

taken only a short distance from the city and there killed.

There were two Armenian surgeons in the city, young men, earnest, faithful and enthusiastic over their work, not influenced in the performance of their duties by the thought of what was being done to their people. One morning they told Sister Martha and Miss McLaren that they had been ordered to go to Sert to take charge of a hospital which Djevdet Bey was starting there. A Turkish doctor later told the missionaries that he had seen their bodies lying by the roadside about six miles from the city.

Sister Martha and Miss McLaren had brought with them from Van two Armenian boys who had been working in the military hospital there and for whom Sister Martha had secured from the military authorities papers insuring their safety. When the Bitlis men were taken from the city, one of these lads was ill in a hospital. Sister Martha, hearing that he had been taken out with the other Armenians, went to the chief of police to inform him of these papers and to ask that the boy might be sent back. The chief said that he would send an order to this effect. When she went to see him again he told her that

it was impossible to bring the boy back, as he had been killed on the day that he was taken out. His companion was spared.

For several days the Protestant women took food to the prison and were allowed to talk freely with the men who crowded around the windows. The prisoners sent word to the missionaries that they had done right in not permitting weapons on the mission premises; that the whole affair had been so fiendishly planned by the government that there had been no chance of escape for the men from the first; they were praying that the efforts made to save the women and children might succeed.

After a week of this the women were told one morning that all the Protestants had been put into an underground dungeon. Various stories were heard later as to what happened to these men, but all that was definitely known was that they were taken out in groups and killed not far from the city. One story, the truth of which Mr. Knapp believed to be well established, was that one group of 700 men was taken out to a place about six miles from the city and lined up on either side of trenches already prepared. Kurds then came upon them and killed them.

Several of the men on the mission premises had hidden during the first search and so escaped. One of these was Kevork Effendi Kooyoomjian, a graduate of Central College, Aintab, and head teacher in the boys' school. But he decided that he could not hope to save himself and that if he were discovered it might work harm to the women and children under the care of the missionaries. He had married but a few years before one of the teachers in the girls' school, a girl most attractive in person and lovely in character. Their courtship had been a romantic one, their betrothal not the usual businesslike arrangement between two families, but a real "love match." At her wedding, Heghene, instead of being shrouded Oriental fashion in a shapeless dark silk mantle, had looked like an American bride with her lace veil, orange-flower wreath and bridal bouquet—a fair vision that had impressed itself upon the imagination of all the young people who had been present. Their short married life had been a very happy one, except for the death of their first child; they had at this time a beautiful little girl one year old.

The day after Kevork Effendi had made his

decision the police sent word that they were coming to search the American premises for men who were in hiding. That morning the young couple spent several hours alone together, then joined in the main room of the school the others who meant to surrender, and waited calmly the event that would too surely separate them. She sat at his feet with the baby in her arms.

"Miss Shane, if we should both be taken will you not keep our baby?" asked Kevork Effendi.

When the police came he and his young brother-in-law shook hands with their friends as composedly as if they were merely going for a walk, and no one seeing the sweet look of courage on Deegeen Heghene's face would have guessed that the man was her husband and the boy her brother. Kevork Effendi looked strong and triumphant, for although he knew he was going to his death, the night spent in prayer had prepared him for his fate and he had no fear. Had those around him had eyes to see they would have beheld one whose form was "like unto the Son of God," walking in the fiery furnace beside him.

VIII

DEPORTATION OF THE WOMEN

TWO or three days after the men on the American premises were taken to prison the Vali told Mr. Knapp that an order had come for a general deportation of Armenians, but that families would be allowed to go in safety together. Yet within a few days (June 29th or 30th) the police began to hound women and children out of their homes, insulting and beating them cruelly and forcing by kicks and blows and curses those who fell by the wayside to get up and go on. A few escaping and coming back with faces mutilated and hands cut off substantiated the rumours concerning the fate of those who were driven away. The Americans, whose premises were still strictly guarded, were not allowed to take these poor creatures in, but could talk to them at the gate, give them bread and a little money, and then they would be gathered up and driven away again.

Miss Shane had taken up her residence in the girls' school where, besides her girls, there were a number of women and children who had come to her for protection. A day or two after their deportation began she went with Miss McLaren as interpreter to the Vali and requested that the schoolgirls and the women with her in the school building be allowed to remain. He said that she might take her pupils to Harpoot and put them in the school there. She knew that the school buildings in Harpoot had been taken by the government for hospital purposes, and that the roads were covered with the bodies of the dead; she thought, too, of the fate of the women and little children who would be left behind, and replied that if he were sincere in assuring her that she could take the girls safely to Harpoot he would be willing to have them remain quietly in Bitlis till travelling was safer. He answered that an order had come from Constantinople that not an Armenian should remain in Bitlis; the responsibility was not his.

"In that case I will not give them up," she answered.

She meant to barricade the school building. It seemed necessary to take a firm stand on this

point, and neither she nor her associates believed that the authorities would proceed to extremes to get possession of these few women and girls.

He finally consented to allow the girls and women in the school to remain "until the last." She asked to whom she might appeal to insure their ultimate safety and he gave her the name and address of the military commandant, who had decided the matter in regard to the women. This man was at the front with his army, so Miss Shane immediately wrote to him, sending a copy of the letter to the Vali together with the list of her women and girls which he had demanded of her. To this letter no answer was ever received.

The missionaries were obliged to promise that no more people should be taken into the compound and tried to keep this promise as their only hope of saving a few.

The police seemed to have gone mad in their thirst for Armenian blood. One day Miss Shane saw from her window a white-haired old woman stumbling along the street beneath a rain of blows from a gendarme's gun. A younger woman, herself so weak she could scarcely walk,

was trying to support her. Suddenly the gendarme sprang in front of them and pointed his bayonet at the old woman as if to run it through her body. She fell in a heap at his feet. Whereupon he seized her first by the girdle and then by the hair and dragged her along the rough street. She was left for dead near the girls' school and they were allowed to take her in. She had a sweet and gentle face and was found to be a member of a well-to-do family. Officials were very angry when they found how she had been treated, for she was supposed to know where a large sum of money was concealed and they wanted it. The poor creature did not live long enough to tell her secret.

Another old woman died in the school who was found lying in the street outside with just strength enough to lift her hand slightly in an effort to ward off a dog who was sniffing at her face. Several times the missionaries were allowed to bring inside those who were found in a dying condition.

The screams of women and children could be heard at almost any time during the day. The cries that rang out through the darkness of the night were even more heartrending.

"Once," writes Miss Shane, "I was startled from sleep by a woman's shriek of terror, followed by cries and pleadings which were answered only by the jeering laugh of men. For about two hours I could hear the woman's low moans, like those of a tortured animal. The sound grew fainter and fainter and at last—silence.

"One day I was watching a crowd of women and children in the street below. They were led by a gendarme to a spot just beneath the window, then made to stop. A few women gave money to the gendarmes and were then set free. They ran frantically hither and thither like frightened animals. Where could they go for safety? There *was* no safety for them. The fiendish grin on the face of the man who had released them showed that he relished the sport. This incident confirmed to my mind the report that gendarmes accepted bribes from the women who had a bit of money, but that these women were captured again later and taken down the road.

"By working quietly we had managed to take in about thirty little children who had come starving to our gates and the guards there had

not objected. The first few indeed had been brought to us by Turkish soldiers. We felt sure we should not be able to keep them but would provide for them as long as possible. One of these was the daughter of our teacher in Tadvan. Her eyes had the deep blue of the sky when a storm is threatening. She was always quiet, but so sweet that she never passed unnoticed, her little face so serious, so solemn. So were the faces of all the little ones. One of the things that impressed me most was that the little children never smiled, always that look of hurt wonder on their faces. In her quaint baby fashion she once told the girls the name of the Kurd who had killed her father, and added, 'May he die a death like that.' She was taken ill after a while and did not recover.

"Finally a policeman came to take these orphans away. Among them was a little girl between two and three years of age, a grandchild in one of the best families in Bitlis. She had the sweetest, most winning baby face I have ever seen. We had all grown to love her. When she was put in line with the others I rushed forward, took her up in my arms and begged to be allowed to keep her.

The policeman refused. Her innocent, trustful face would have melted a heart of stone. She toddled along with the others, but before they reached the gate a Turk employed in the hospital picked her up and was permitted to keep her. The child, however, turned her face from him and wriggled and twisted to get out of his arms. He took her home and his family tried to win her by kindness, but she was obdurate. He finally gave her into the care of one of our women.

"As far as I know, with but one exception, the choice of accepting Islam was not given to men and boys nor to the poorer classes of women. However, many of those belonging to wealthy families were urged to become Moslems. Three women from the principal ward of the city came to tell us that if they refused to accept Islam they would be sent down the road. One of these was the sister of a teacher in our girls' school. I was later (when ill in bed) told by one of my teachers that this woman had refused to accept Islam and had been sent off with her ten-year-old daughter, and that both had been taken by Kurds; the mother had come back to the school accompanied by a Kurdish

woman and asked her sister for ten liras, saying that the Kurds had threatened to kill her daughter if she did not give that much money, but if she gave it she would be allowed to take her daughter away. She received the money, went away and was never heard of again.

"Some time after my illness I was calling on a Turkish officer's wife; she and her husband had shown kindness to Armenians and were friendly to us. She said they had found that little ten-year-old girl wandering in the streets half naked and in a terrible condition, having been maltreated in most inhuman fashion. They had taken her in and were having an old Armenian woman take care of her. She said also that they themselves were out of favour with the government because of their lack of sympathy with the way in which Armenians were being treated and therefore were being sent to Aleppo.

"A little innocent-faced lad, one of our schoolboys who had found his way back to our premises during the evacuation of the city, told me that he was one of a large party of women and children driven down the road. He had escaped a short distance from the city and came back to

the house of a friendly Turk. The Turk, however, insisted on his becoming Moslem, so he ran away. Before his escape on the road he had seen a young woman who was carrying a baby shot down because she had not strength to keep up with the others. Her body was left lying where it fell, the baby still in her arms.

"One of our pupils, a girl, was sent to prison, but later was released and allowed to go back to the house of Mustifa Bey, superintendent of hospitals, where she had been staying. She told me that the prison was crowded with women and children kept there without food or water."

Many women were kept in the courtyard of an Armenian church, others in a large house just across the street from the American premises and still others were herded together like cattle in an open field between the public highway and the river at a place called the "Arab Bridge," not far from the city. Soldiers were stationed near by to guard them. There was no shelter, no privacy. Day after day these women, many of them accustomed to comfort if not luxury in their homes, were kept there in the hot July sun and entirely at the mercy of the beasts who guarded them. A few managed to escape

by bribing the guards, or under cover of the night, and the stories they told the missionaries of their sufferings at the hands of the soldiers were too awful to repeat.

After a while the young and attractive women were taken into Turkish or Kurdish homes and the rest sent "down the road," most of them to death. Many threw themselves and their children into the river to escape the suffering and abuse they were unable to endure longer.

Some of the prominent citizens had provided their families with poison, which they took rather than fall into the hands of the Turks. Other women with their children refused to leave their burning houses, counting that kind of death preferable to life in a Turkish harem. The thirteen-year-old daughter of Pastor Khachig, seeing a bottle marked "Poison" in Miss McLaren's room, told the women in the house, "There is a bottle of poison in Miss McLaren's room, and if the Turks try to take me away I am going to drink some."

The deportation of the women began the first week in July. It continued for months with but one week's interruption.

IX

THE RUSSIAN ARMY APPROACHES

THE Russian army, after its occupation of Van, moved slowly westward, meeting with stubborn resistance at many points. The motor-boat which had brought Miss McLaren and Sister Martha across the lake and one of the large sailboats were loaded at Tadvan with ammunition to be taken back to the Turkish army. They were ordered first to Vostan, a town about seven hours from Van, from there ordered back across the lake to a village called Surp, not far from Tadvan and near to where a battle was to be fought.

On arrival at Surp the captain and his brother went to report to the authorities, leaving the boats in charge of two Armenian boatmen, with two guards on shore. The boatmen shot the guards with the captain's gun and sailed back to the Russians with the ammunition.

The people of the village of Avantz, the seaport of Van, were mostly sailors, and whether from choice or by compulsion had been most faithful in their service to the government. Had it not been for them the Turks would never have been able to transport their hospital patients and equipment across the lake and many of the civil population would have been unable to flee towards Bitlis before the advancing enemy. When the general massacre of April 19th took place in Van province this place was left untouched. Of course the Turks realized how much depended upon the loyalty of these villagers. At the time of the incident related above they had no further use for the boats and sailors, and saying that they must have revenge for the murder of the two soldiers and the loss of the ammunition, they gathered together all the boatmen who could be found in Tadvan and drowned them in the lake.

About the middle of July the Russian army drew very near to Bitlis; those living on the outskirts of the city could hear the firing. The Moslem population fled. The Governor sent word to the Americans that they would have to go. But as Miss Shane was ill at the time, they

decided to remain. They had been constantly exposed to typhus, and Miss Shane had fallen ill on July 4th.

It may be noted in passing, that at this very time five of the missionaries in Van also fell ill of typhus which they had contracted from Moslem refugees, one thousand of whom they cared for on their premises after the Russian occupation. But there was absolutely no communication between the two cities; the Americans in each were quite ignorant of the condition of their friends in the other.

Many Moslems when they fled left with the missionaries the women and girls whom they had taken into their harems, an action that seemed to show that their intentions in the first place had been kind.

Other women who had so far escaped capture also fled to the Americans for protection from the Kurds, who were swarming into the city for plunder, knowing that before the arrival of the Russians they could flee back to safe retreats in the mountains.

"We told them that the Governor had forbidden our taking any more Armenians in, but that it seemed now the Governor himself would

be leaving shortly and if they cared to take their chance with us, we would do what we could, but if the government should demand them we could probably not prevent their being taken. They said that if they remained in the city they would undoubtedly fall victims to the Kurds and would take their chance with us."

Even the soldiers fled. The Turkish patients who could be moved were sent off towards Diarbekir, and the others were brought to the Protestant church and the English Consulate (a near-by building which had once been the Consulate), and were given over to the care of Mr. Knapp and Sister Martha. American flags were put up over the buildings for protection. Later, one of the accusations brought against Mr. Knapp was that he had put up flags to guide the enemy.

There was a branch of the Ottoman bank in Bitlis. The bankers, a Greek and an Italian, afraid to remain in the business district on account of the Kurds, left it and came to stay with Mr. Knapp. The danger was so great that the Vali, who was still in the city with a few officers and soldiers, was asked for a guard and gave it. The bankers watched half of the night

and Mr. Knapp the other half for a week. Then the bankers left the city, telling the Americans before they did so that they (the Americans) were in great danger of being attacked by Kurds at the instigation of the government to prevent their giving information to the enemy.

Sister Martha was free to act independently of the Americans, of course, and the Turks took for granted that she would leave with the hospital authorities. She had great fears of becoming a prisoner of the Russians and the Americans supposed she would go. One morning she came to Miss Shane, whom she had been nursing, and said, " I've made my decision. Mustifa Bey just came on his horse and was surprised that I was not ready to go, but I told him I wasn't going. Whatever may be my fate in Russia I will not go one step farther with the Turks."

A few hours after it was reported that the Vali was on the point of leaving, the news was brought that the Russians were retreating. Word was immediately sent out to the fleeing populace to return and by the 24th the Turks were back again.

X

THE PASSING OF MISS CHARLOTTE ELY

THE shock of these events proved too great for Miss Charlotte Ely, now in her seventy-sixth year, to endure. She did her utmost to relieve and comfort the people she loved, spending much of her time among the village refugees, of whom many had once been her pupils, listening to their stories and praying for them most wonderful prayers. But she suffered so intensely through her sympathy with them that body and mind weakened under the strain; she sank into a state of unconsciousness at last, from which she rallied only once or twice, and on July 11th she passed beyond all care and sorrow.

Charlotte and Mary Ely, daughters of an American clergyman and a gifted English mother, were born in America and spent their childhood in Philadelphia. Early orphaned, they were given a home and a very unusual education for those days by their uncle, Ezra S.

Charlotte E. Ely

Alzina Churchill Knapp

Mary A. C. Ely

George Perkins Knapp

Ely, of Buffalo. He sent them to Elmira College and to Mt. Holyoke Seminary, whence they graduated with the "war class" of '61, then sent them abroad. Charlotte studied music under famous masters in Heidelberg, both studied languages in Germany and France, visited Italy, where they met Garibaldi, and made the acquaintance of their mother's family in England.

At the end of two years they returned to America. On the home-going steamer they became acquainted with Rev. and Mrs. George C. Knapp, from Turkey, and this proved to be a turning point in their lives, for their hearts were deeply touched by what Mrs. Knapp had to tell them of the narrow, meager, burdened lives of Oriental women and of the little school she had started for girls in Bitlis. Charlotte promised to find a teacher for this school, but before long she decided to be herself that teacher; her sister came independently to the same conclusion, and the two joined the Knapps on their return to Bitlis in 1868.

From the first they were charmed with the romantic situation of that isolated mountain city and became so deeply in love with their work there that they could not be induced to

leave it, though more than once Charlotte, noted for her executive and administrative ability, was asked to become the head of much larger schools in (seemingly) more important missions. One winter she consented to take charge of the school in Van, but she could be torn away from her Bitlis home, even for needed rest and change, only against her will. In her forty-seven years of missionary life she returned to America but twice, and in 1915 had not had a furlough for eighteen years. A woman of private fortune, many friends, cultivated tastes, love for the best in music, art, literature, great capacity for enjoyment, she gave up without regret all that civilization offered her, buried herself in this remote corner of Kurdistan and devoted all her powers to the service of its people.

The sisters developed Mrs. Knapp's school into "The Mt. Holyoke Seminary of Bitlis." Girls from the most primitive, sordid village homes; girls from homes of material prosperity but mental and spiritual vacuity; wild, ignorant girls who had worked like beasts of burden in the fields; girls bejewelled and petted whose outlook was early marriage to strangers of their

parents' choosing, and responsibilities for which they were totally unfitted—these were taken in, trained to obedience, self-control, truth-telling, thrift and neatness, brought into intimate association with these two wonderful women and surrounded with an atmosphere of love and prayer. Character was what the Elys were striving for; with infinite patience they hewed and chiselled till the rough shapeless marble took on form and beauty under their hands; into those young lives they poured the rich treasures of their own hearts and minds and souls; their graduates became noble women whose influence as teachers, wives and mothers civilized and Christianized the communities in which they lived.

Mary Ely was no whit behind Charlotte in her self-forgetful devotion to her work, and to this she added a peculiar devotion to her sister. Hers was a more practical temperament; the financial management of the school and the charge of its domestic department fell to her share; common sense characterized her, shrewd insight into character, a sincere humility, a tender love for the weak or suffering and especially for little children.

The efforts of the sisters were not confined to the Seminary. They toured the villages frequently, establishing and superintending secondary schools and organizing work for women everywhere.

To all this was added the management of orphanages after the massacres of 1895–96. This meant more than feeding, clothing, training and teaching the homeless waifs gathered in from the street; it meant providing for their future when they reached maturity, choosing good husbands for them, and seeing to it that they were well treated in their new homes. Many a betrothal was solemnized in the Elys' parlour; many a modest trousseau they prepared with motherly solicitude and truly feminine pleasure in the task.

For a good many years after Mrs. Knapp's departure from Bitlis Miss Charlotte had the charge, also, of the boarding department of the boys' school. She was as successful in the management of boys as of girls, thoroughly understanding boy nature and skillful in dealing with it, and many a capable and useful preacher, teacher, man of business, has affectionately acknowledged that the good in him he owed to

Mire-Varzhoohee's (Mother-Teacher's) care and guidance.

She planned her school buildings and supervised their erection; minutely supervised the work of carpenters, masons, gardeners, etc., in her employ, teaching them new methods and the accuracy foreign to the Oriental mind. Hers was a many sided personality; contrasted with her great strength of character and almost masculine abilities were peculiar weaknesses due to an extremely nervous, intense, sensitive temperament. The fear of high winds, thunderstorms and earthquakes was an acute torment all her life, and every time she crossed the ocean she was almost beside herself with terror throughout the voyage. Yet she continued to live where earthquakes were of common occurrence and where she was separated by that dreaded ocean from her early home and friends and relatives, because she loved her work with all her heart and soul.

In her wonderful memory was stored not only the names of all her boys and girls, of her neighbours and of the members of the Protestant community, but also an immense amount of detail concerning their characters and per-

sonalities, their relationships and the main events in their lives.

Both sisters identified themselves wholly with the interests of their people and possessed their unbounded confidence and affection. Moslems as well as Christians trusted and revered them.

Mary Ely fell ill in the fall of 1912. Dr. Ussher, hastily summoned from Van, pronounced her trouble heart disease, advised a lower altitude, and took her to Mardin, where she spent the winter under the care of Dr. Thom. At first she improved in health, but later grew worse and sea-level and the care of a specialist seemed necessary. She would allow no one to inform Charlotte of her condition, but Miss Uline, one of her associates at Bitlis, obliged at this time (April) to go to Beirut on business, joined her at Mardin and the two travelled together to the sea-coast.

Arrived in Beirut, Mary Ely sank rapidly. The habit of sparing her idolized sister all possible anxiety persisted to the last. She sent word that she was comfortable and well cared for and that Charlotte was on no account to come to her. She would not permit physicians

and nurses to telegraph the whole truth. On May 5, 1913, she peacefully fell asleep in the arms of the beloved young friend who had most tenderly cared for her during those last days of weakness and pain.

Very bravely did Miss Charlotte bear her loss and loneliness, but half her life seemed gone.

And now that her spirit had taken flight her pupils dressed her in the gown she had worn at her graduation from Mt. Holyoke and she was laid to rest in the garden she had tended for many years. Only a few Armenians were allowed to attend the funeral service. Afterwards one of the teachers said, "To think that she who had taught us so many lovely songs should be laid away without one song from her Armenian girls, and that she who had given her life to the Armenian people should have to be carried to her grave by strange Turkish soldiers!"

Yet this very end, strange and sad as it seems, significantly sealed the renunciations of her lifetime. And who can doubt that she was greeted in the new life by the "new song" on the lips of her Armenian girls, gone before her up "the steep ascent of Heaven through peril, toil and pain"?

XI

AFTER THE RUSSIAN RETREAT

WHEN they had been waiting hourly for word that the Governor and the few remaining officers were leaving, the Americans had got everything in readiness to barricade their buildings against an attack by Kurds. A young Armenian who came to them disguised as a woman was allowed to stay on condition he deliver up his firearms. He was also forbidden to enter the girls' school.

Shortly after the retreat of the Russians and while the Turks were returning to the city two mounted gendarmes rode into the school premises. Mr. Knapp asked them what they wanted.

"That is our business."

"These are American premises and you have no right to come in this way without an order."

"You are the man we want; you come with us."

They drew their guns to force him to accom-

pany them. Mr. Knapp carried no arms: it will be remembered that the Armenian men admitted to the premises early in June had been asked to give up their arms and he would not assume a privilege refused to them. Just outside the school gate they encountered a soldier who protested against their action and while the controversy was on Mr. Knapp left them and went on to the Ely residence.

The incident seemed significant in the light of an experience of his following the massacres of 1895 (see Chapter XIV), and he told Miss Shane there was a possibility of his being obliged to leave.

A few days later officers came and asked him to accompany them to a neighbouring house as they had an official communication to make to him, and they threatened to use force if he did not immediately accede to their request. Miss McLaren, at that time nursing Sister Martha, who was ill with typhus, heard of this and made up her mind to go with him.

"Escorted to a room where there were several civil and military officials, we were given the 'highest seats in the synagogue.' The spokesman as I remember was the chief of

police, and he began by telling us that as foreigners living in Turkish territory we were the honoured guests of the Ottoman Government and as such entitled to all the protection they could provide. Bitlis was in the war zone and therefore we must move to safer quarters. It was then four o'clock in the afternoon, and we were to be ready to leave at seven the next morning. Miss Shane was to go also. In vain I pleaded for permission to remain as long as Sister Martha lived. No, they had hospitals and she could be cared for in one of them. Indignation and wrath increased as I listened, and then I gave them my opinion of Turkish gratitude that would permit them to treat thus lightly the care of one who was dying because of what she had done for their soldiers. They looked at me in amazement (perhaps in amusement) but repeated that I could not stay. As there seemed nothing further to be said or done, I went back to my patient, feeling sure that I would stay with her until the end, but not knowing how it was to be brought about."

The officers told Mr. Knapp that they wished to look over the premises and see how many people were still there. The persecution of

defenseless women and children had been resumed immediately on the return of the Turks and gendarmes had come to take away those who, when the city had been practically evacuated, had come to the American premises for protection from the plundering Kurds (see Chapter IX). Word was sent Miss Shane that those who had been with her in the school from the first (the sixty or seventy who had been listed) would not be molested. Unable to remain quietly in bed, however, in this critical situation, Miss Shane dressed hurriedly and went across the hall to where the women and girls were congregated. Mr. Knapp, downstairs, was urging the gendarmes to leave the women where they were, but they declared they were under orders and must take them.

Suddenly a shot rang out; Mr. Knapp and two gendarmes ran up into the hall but finding all quiet on the second floor went below and discovered that the shot had been fired from a window in the kitchen. Some of the women upon the arrival of the gendarmes had taken into the schoolhouse the young man who had come to the premises a week earlier disguised as a woman; he had somehow succeeded in

securing a gun, had concealed himself and, thinking perhaps that a thorough search would be made, had aimed at and wounded a soldier. He must have been half-crazed with fear or he would have known that such a foolhardy action could only insure his own capture and would endanger the safety of all the rest.

The Turks, fearfully enraged, surrounded Mr. Knapp in the small entry leading to the kitchen, levelling their guns at him. Miss Shane, hearing from the women that he was in great danger, made her way down-stairs, clinging to the rail. Mr. Knapp, on seeing her, called to her to go back, adding that they were insisting on his entering the kitchen to disarm the Armenian. One of the gendarmes ordered her away. She went on. A policeman who seemed to be in command then motioned her away; when she refused to go he raised his gun to strike her, his face distorted with wrath. Realizing the uselessness of attempting to oppose him further, she turned to go up-stairs. He barred the way, speaking rapidly in Turkish, not a word of which could she understand, then called a common soldier and indicated that she was to follow him. She learned later that she

was thus sent away because they intended to burn the building to prevent the escape of the Armenian.

As Mr. Knapp approached the kitchen door another shot rang out; entering, he found the young man dead by his own hand.

Meanwhile Miss Shane was taken to a large house across the way which was being used as a hospital. The principal of the girls' school joined her before she reached the gate, and when Miss Shane sank weak and exhausted into a chair placed for her in one of the hallways, she sat beside her supporting her, and began to scold vigorously the Turks who occasionally passed them, because Miss Shane had been forced to leave the schoolhouse in her weakened condition.

The two women were allowed to remain in this hallway safe and unmolested, as Turks not acting under government orders did not as a rule concern themselves with whatever might be going on. Indeed, in many instances they had ere this shown regret that such things must be. The women and girls in the schoolhouse were brought over to this hospital; later, word was sent to Miss Shane that she might go back

to the schoolhouse, for the building would not be burned now that the young Armenian was dead.

Meanwhile several of the officers had gone immediately after the shooting incident to Miss McLaren in the Ely house.

"I had heard the shot and had seen the body being dragged away, but knew nothing further. The enraged men proceeded to enlighten me by saying that Mr. Knapp had hidden that man purposely to shoot one of them. I tried to convince them that this was not true, giving as proofs the facts that we had refused to allow armed men on the premises, and that Mr. Knapp had disarmed several. This statement, instead of establishing our innocence, had the opposite effect.

"'Where are the arms that he took?'

"'They are locked up in his safe.'

"'Why did he not turn them over to us at once? See, he keeps arms on the American compound! We must have them at once,' and they arose to go.

"I did not see fit to tell them that under the couch on which some of them had been sitting there were two guns with ammunition, put there for use in case of an attack by Kurds if the gov-

ernment had been obliged to leave the city. While they were gone, however, I had the guns taken out and put in a less suspicious place, ready to be handed over on demand. On their return all looked as if they had unearthed a great plot against the government and had escaped a great danger. I helped them to search our house for weapons and then renewed my plea that I be allowed to remain, saying that they might do with me what they liked after Sister Martha was gone.

"Referring again to what they chose to call Mr. Knapp's perfidy, they said I must go. Just at that time the superintendent of the hospitals, Mustifa Bey, walked in and asked what the trouble was. On being told he pointed to me and asked, 'Is she going too? I need her in my hospital. She does not belong to Bitlis, but came over from Van with us and I cannot run my hospital without her.' Neither he nor I believed this last, but it put matters in a new light, and after a little whispered consultation it was decided that I might remain. The doctor also put in a word for Miss Shane and permission was given her to remain until her temperature came down to normal."

The gendarmes and soldiers withdrew from the premises with the exception of the usual guard. There was no sleep for any of the Americans that night. The next morning it was found that the women and girls in the house across the way had been left unmolested, but it was still reported that they would be taken from the city later in the day. Permission was given Miss Shane to see them.

"Supported by two of our women, I made my way across the street and to the part of the building where they were being held. The pastor's wife rushed into the room, sank at my feet and buried her face in my lap. The others crowded about me. I told them that I had sent word to Mustifa Bey, the superintendent of hospitals, to intercede for them.

"Those were sad moments for all of us as we knew what the future might hold in store for them. For the most part they were calm and quiet, and most earnest were the prayers that went up as we knelt together.

"I was allowed to remain only fifteen minutes. Just before I left three soldiers came into the room and tried to persuade several of the girls to go with them to another room to do

some work for them. The girls refused and the men did not insist. One young woman, urged more than the others, turned on the soldier and with fearless eyes full of scorn said, 'You can kill me here but I will not go.' This was the spirit of the girls, shown on various occasions, and I was proud of them.

"Up to this time I had been staying in the girls' school. But it seemed that Mr. Knapp would leave that day and as all our girls and women might be sent away at any time, he insisted that, owing to my weak condition, I should go back to the Ely residence.

"In the evening Mustifa Bey came in to tell us that the girls would be allowed to stay. He said that the Governor expressed himself as being sorry that matters had turned out as they had, that he had not intended my girls to be troubled in any way, but since the shooting on our premises investigation was likely to be made from Constantinople, and he could allow them to remain only on condition that they assist in the hospital.

"Mr. Knapp was allowed to do his packing and no limit placed on the amount he could take with him. Monday afternoon he came in to

give me the station books and advise me as to the managing of affairs after his departure. At ten o'clock he came in to say good-bye to us. He was very sad and depressed, more on account of having to leave us alone in that critical situation than on his own account, although he was of the opinion that he would not be allowed to travel safely. For a long time he had been under intense strain, practically working alone. He seemed never to think of himself and had never wavered in his self-sacrificing devotion and service to those under his protection. He was greatly troubled now because he had allowed the young man to come into the premises. But I reminded him that the responsibility was not his only, nor was any one at fault. We could not foresee that the Russians would retreat or that the Armenian would secure firearms and do the insane thing that he had done.

"Before he left the house we had prayers together. Some time past midnight I heard the soft tread of camels and horses in the street below, and knew that he was on his way—alone."

And the two American women were left with their dying friend.

XII

SISTER MARTHA

ONCE when Sister Martha had pleaded in vain for a sick boy that he might be allowed to remain in the compound until he recovered instead of being taken away from the city to his death—as she knew, a Turkish officer took her aside and said, "Why do you mix in this business? This is an American home and you are a German; you may get into trouble; keep away."

Her reply was, "Even if I am a German, this is as much my business as the Americans' and I won't keep away as long as I think I can help the Armenians."

The Turks talked with her freely about their treatment of the Armenians, expecting her to see the matter from their point of view because she was a German, and constantly reminded her that they were allies. They went so far as to say that Germany was responsible for the massacres and hardly a day passed that some

Turkish official did not step up to her, put his forefingers together and say, "We are brothers, we are allies." Such remarks seemed little short of sacrilege to her, for she believed the Kaiser incapable of doing wrong.

"Oh!" she would say to the Americans, "we love our Kaiser. He would not do such things."

Later she evidently began to suspect, or had reason to believe, that Germany was responsible for the massacres, and this belief broke her heart. Physically she had suffered greatly for many months though she had never permitted her health to interfere with her work; mentally she now suffered even more keenly because of her sympathy with the Armenians and her love for her fatherland. The strain was too great for her to bear; she often said to Miss McLaren, "I want to go home. Not to my home in Konigsberg but to my Father's home." And every morning before going to her work she would sing the hymn, "Ich mochte Heim."

Her desire was soon fulfilled. She fell ill with typhus and from the first there seemed to be no chance of her recovery. In her delirium she would scream "Herrlichkeit!" then add in a lower voice, "Ja Vater, du weiz." Miss Mc-

Laren nursed her throughout her illness and wrote at her dictation little loving messages to her friends and relatives. After ten days of intense suffering she entered her "Father's Home" on July 29, 1915.

There was no one in the city, Moslem or Christian, who could make even a rough box for a coffin, so Miss McLaren took a bier used for carrying Turkish soldiers to the grave, cleansed it, lined it and made it more fit for her purpose. She conducted the burial service which Miss Shane, two doctors and a few Armenian women and girls attended.

No notice was taken by the Turkish Government of Sister Martha's death, although she had given her life for its soldiers. A few weeks later the Vali asked Miss McLaren who Sister Martha was, as an inquiry about her had come from the German ambassador. Miss McLaren had good reason to believe that he never took the trouble to answer this inquiry.[1]

[1] See Chapter XV.

XIII

THE PIONEER PARENTS OF GEORGE PERKINS KNAPP

ONE October morning in 1855 a newly married couple set out from New England on what proved a unique wedding journey. They were to sail across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, but they had no sooner left port than a terrific storm arose; the first mate was washed overboard; the voyage lasted so much longer than expected that before its end the water and food supply was exhausted; crew and passengers secured drinking water by setting vessels out on deck to catch the rain. Worst of all, the captain was drunk when the ship reached the Ægean Sea and there was no other officer capable of navigating the ship through the dangerous archipelago.

There were seven missionaries on board: the newly married pair, George Cushing Knapp and

his wife Alzina Churchill Knapp, Rev. and Mrs. Edward Aiken, Rev. and Mrs. O. P. Allen and Dr. H. B. Haskell. The four men were fresh from theological seminary or medical school and had never set foot on a sailing vessel before, but they were equal to the emergency: locking the drunken captain into his cabin they took the chart, studied it, and navigated the ship successfully to port.

At Smyrna the seven travelling companions separated. Dr. Haskell carried on medical work in Mosul for a while; the wife [1] he married two years later, who visited Bitlis and became a warm friend of the Knapps, is still living. Mr. and Mrs. Aiken joined the mission at Beirut and Mr. and Mrs. Allen were stationed at Harpoot and a son and a daughter of theirs also became missionaries in Turkey. Mr. Allen, the last survivor of this little group, died in Constantinople in the spring of 1918.

Mr. and Mrs. Knapp joined what was then called the Assyrian Mission, and were stationed in Diarbekir with Rev. and Mrs. Augustus Walker and Dr. and Mrs. David O. Nutting. In 1858, however, they begged to be permitted

[1] Mrs. S. B. Tibbals of New Haven.

to establish a station in a city whose need had greatly appealed to them during a summer spent there away from the great heat of the Diarbekir plain.

Bitlis is situated on a plateau so high and so abrupt that in six hours of horseback travel one can pass from a region of heavy winter snows to a land of perpetual summer. It is the "door between highlands and lowlands," as the valley of the Bitlis River is the avenue of communication between the plateaus of the northeast and east and the Mesopotamian plains.

The houses are built of large hewn blocks of a sort of lava which is silvery gray and soft enough to be cut with a knife when fresh from the quarry, but turns hard and brown after long exposure to the weather. Earthquakes have been very frequent; in 1906 a series of earthquakes of unusual severity did much damage in the villages of the region, but the houses of Bitlis with their three-foot-thick stone walls were injured in but few cases. Near the city is an extinct volcano, Nimroud Dagh, which has a crater second in size only to Crater Lake, Oregon.

Mr. Knapp immediately started a class for

young men which met every evening at his home. Mrs. Knapp taught daily a class of girls and women. Mr. Trowbridge was their associate the first winter; the next they were left alone. The opposition of the jealous, ignorant Gregorian priesthood was very severe at first and at one time a mob set upon Mr. Knapp and his helpers in the market-place. Dr. and Mrs. Nutting were with them for a while in 1860 and that summer the two men explored a field which included two hundred towns and villages, of which one hundred and twenty-eight were Armenian. But this explored region was less than half of the territory, fifteen hundred square miles in area, belonging to Bitlis " station " and the missionaries in Bitlis must evangelize this territory if it was to be evangelized at all. Rev. and Mrs. Lysander T. Burbank joined them in 1861 and remained nine years. After their departure the Knapps and the Misses Ely, whom they had brought back with them on their return from furlough in 1868, were the only missionaries in this great field for fourteen years.

The work was a pioneer work indeed. The people were amazingly ignorant and geographic-

ally and chronologically remote from civilization. There were no railroads in Kurdistan; no post horses, even, came to Bitlis in the sixties, and the Americans had to send a man once a month to Erzerum for their mail. People lived and laboured as their ancestors had done before them for hundreds of years. Women were despised, overworked, led lives of dreary, slavish subjection. The almost incredible ignorance of mothers, the absence of any medical help whatsoever, the lack of sanitation, were the causes of a seventy-five per cent infant mortality and an immense amount of physical suffering, deformity and blindness.

The American missionaries educated girls as well as boys—an unheard of, and at first bitterly opposed, experiment. They sought first of all to build up strong helpful Christian characters. Knowledge, a wider outlook, new ideals, new ambitions, the personal influence and example of these American teachers, gradually raised the whole level of civilization in the region. Homes like those of Pastor Khachig and his wife, Kevork Effendi's and Deegeen Heghene's—cultured, happy, love-filled homes; characters like theirs that bore triumphantly the supreme

test at the last, were the bright flowering of this new civilization.

For this work Mr. and Mrs. Knapp were peculiarly fitted: the pioneer blood of six generations of New England ancestry ran in their veins; theirs was the resourcefulness, ambition and "grit" that seems the heritage of those born and bred on New England farms; and theirs a whole-hearted, enthusiastic devotion to the service of their Master.

Mr. Knapp had the true Yankee ingenuity, inventiveness and mechanical ability. He taught his pupils to make the furniture of their schoolroom, and helped them pay their way with the work of their hands. He introduced the use of window-glass, and dark germ-breeding dwellings were thus opened to the purifying sunlight. He planted a garden, raising in it many vegetables unknown to that region, two of which, the potato and tomato, became staple products and articles of diet thereafter. He was not a physician, but the sick constantly appealed to him for relief and he and his wife dispensed simple remedies with common sense advice concerning the care of the sick and of little children.

A good boys' school, a girls' seminary, a

strong evangelical church and community developed in a comparatively short time from very modest beginnings. Schools and preaching centers were established in the surrounding villages until there were twenty-eight in the vilayet from which came girls and boys prepared for entrance into the two boarding-schools in Bitlis and from which radiated enlightenment and helpful influence to all parts of the province.

The Havedorig region was a remarkable example of the changes wrought by these centers. Its inhabitants when Mr. Knapp first visited them were bloodthirsty, thievish brigands; fifteen years later the church at Havedorig was working a reform among the hundred villages of Moush plain, and the people were gradually becoming peaceful, law-abiding, prosperous and intelligent.

The unusual experiences of the missionaries both at home and while travelling and touring the villages would fill a volume. One of Mr. Knapp's journeys was a voyage down the Tigris River to Mosul on a raft made of wood resting on over a hundred inflated goat-skins. At night the travellers would anchor the raft near some village. Passing through the narrows between

Home life in an Armenian village

Life in an Armenian refugee camp—Port Said

high rocky bluffs they were shot at by robber Kurds.

During another journey he and his companion, Dr. George C. Raynolds of Van, were attacked and robbed by the noted brigand, Mousa Bey.

When the Russo-Turkish war broke out Mr. Knapp was taking his oldest son George to Constantinople to send him thence to America. He had to consign the boy to the care of the captain of a Black Sea steamer and hasten back to his other children and the three American ladies, left alone in Bitlis. Troops from Bagdad on their way to the front near Erzerum passed through the city; several thousand Kurdish Volunteers from the South plundered the Armenians of Bitlis, outraging and killing many; they *said* they had come north not to fight but to plunder. Many Armenians brought their most cherished possessions to Mr. Knapp for safe keeping. His presence restrained these Kurds to an appreciable extent.

War was followed by terrible famine and the missionaries opened a soup kitchen for the destitute. Among those who came to this soup kitchen for relief was a high-spirited, handsome

boy from the highlands of Sassun who later worked his way through the mission school and theological seminary, married a graduate of the Mt. Holyoke Seminary of Bitlis, was for a time a preacher and teacher in the villages, and finally became pastor of the church in Bitlis. This was Khachig Vartanian, the story of whose martyrdom and that of his wife has been told in the preceding chapters.

At the time this young lad first entered Bitlis the pastor of its Protestant Church was Rev. Simon Tavitian, who was another remarkable product of the mountain fastnesses of Sassun, a man of originality of character, extraordinary learning and great practical ability—a revered leader of his people.

Except for two years, 1902–1904, when Dr. Herbert Underwood was stationed there, never was there an American, and seldom a native, physician in Bitlis, and this lack was the cause of many hard experiences. At one time when Mrs. Knapp was dangerously ill her husband consulted by telegraph with Dr. Parmelee in Erzerum and followed his directions successfully. After Dr. C. D. Ussher went to Van in 1899 he considered himself responsible for the

Bitlis station as well, and often crossed the lake or made the hard four-days' journey over the mountains, to minister to its missionaries in their need. But this was after Mr. and Mrs. Knapp's time.

Sixteen years elapsed between Mr. Knapp's first and second furlough. In 1884 he was released for greatly needed rest by the transfer of Rev. Royal M. Cole and his wife from Erzerum to Bitlis, where they remained until 1907. During the Russo-Turkish war, Mr. Cole had cared very efficiently for the wounded soldiers in Erzerum. This city was one of the strategic points of the war and was taken by the Russians in 1878.

In 1890 Mr. Knapp's own son George became his associate in the work at Bitlis and three years later a daughter also. His last days were passed among the people he had laboured for; he was spared the terrible grief of witnessing the massacres of 1895–96, for he died on March 12, 1895.

The missionaries had been bitterly opposed by the Gregorian priesthood at the first. But now the Gregorians requested that Mr. Knapp's grave should be within their church and begged

the privilege of taking a share in the burial services. These were exceedingly impressive and deeply significant of the changes brought about in the space of one man's lifetime, largely through the quiet influence of his own personality.

George Cushing Knapp's preëminent gift was the gift of inspiring confidence and affection. His people believed absolutely in his sincerity, his interest in them, his desire to help them, his devotion to the Master he served. He won the respect and admiration of those who were hostile to his religion, who were incapable of understanding his motives. One of his staunchest friends was a Kurdish neighbour, a man of position and influence, whose loyalty was in war and massacre put severely to the test and did not fail.

His was never the critical censorious spirit that mars so many forceful personalities; his never the tongue to wound with cruel thrust like that of a rapier. He would live at peace with all men. But underneath all his gentleness was the granite of his native state: he could never be moved by physical danger or the fear of men where principle was at stake.

Mrs. Knapp was a very important factor in the success of the mission at Bitlis. In her girlhood she had had an intense craving for knowledge, and secured with much hard work an education for herself and later for two younger sisters. She became assistant principal of Castleton Seminary, having charge of its girl students and governing them with love and sympathetic understanding.

After she had passed over to the Misses Ely the school for girls she had established in Bitlis, she gave much of her time to the boys' school, always teaching a number of classes and having full charge of the boarding department. She mothered the boys far from their own village homes, looking after their clothing, giving them work with which to pay their way, and supervising their discipline. No boy so stubborn and insubordinate but could be melted and subdued by an interview with "Khanum." She had a remarkable gift for dealing with people, for calming their angry passions and making them "see reason," obey the dictates of common sense and good judgment and forget their prejudices and animosities. Throughout her life she was constantly called upon to settle

quarrels and adjust difficulties, and many a delicate and complicated situation did she handle with the skill of a born diplomat.

Besides her school work she had the teaching of her own children and the cares of housekeeping. A notable cook herself, she trained successive Armenian women to something approaching her own perfection in that line, and her hospitable home was an oasis in the desert of miserable Oriental khans for the infrequent European travellers through that region.

Her busy days, with their great number and variety of regular tasks which left not a moment unoccupied, were further filled—to overflowing—by incessant interruptions: the visits of Turkish men—wives of high officials—the visits of families of wealth and influence, the appeals of all sorts and conditions of men and women for advice, comfort, or assistance. "Khanum" meant one woman and no other to the people of Bitlis: an American woman with a vivid, forceful personality radiating sunny cheer and stimulating sympathy, strong, true, intensely loving, Christlike.

A hot summer spent in an Oriental town utterly lacking in sanitation seriously injures

the health of children of Occidental parentage. So Mrs. Knapp moved her family every year to a mountain three miles from the city. There was a small Armenian village here; its tiny fields of cabbage and turnips, millet, wheat and clover, rose one above another on terraces like a green flight of stairs. On two terraces above the highest of these camped the missionaries in tents and dug-outs, and here Mrs. Knapp planted a garden and tended it with never-failing delight, reliving in memory the childhood days spent on her father's Vermont farm.

The Elys brought their school up here for the summer term each year—no great undertaking since desks, chairs, tables and bedsteads did not have to be moved also. The girls from secluded Oriental homes revelled in the unwonted physical freedom and simple pleasures of this outdoor life. Often after the studies and household tasks of the day, they would play "Tag" and "Fox and Geese" and many another old-fashioned game on the terrace in the light of a full moon.

A small river almost encircled the mountain at its base; a waterfall in a ravine opposite filled the air with its mild musical thunder; a brook

rushed down past the camp to water the fields of the village whose ant-hill-like houses in their setting of green trees were just visible from the edge of the Knapp terrace.

It was a place absolutely shut in by mountains and the world shut out—"a haunt of ancient peace." The word "home" has always brought instantly the picture of this quiet retreat before the inner eye of one, at least, whose childhood summers were spent there.

But now the picture is as instantly followed by the stabbing reminder that Cindian also became in 1915 the scene of hideous carnage; that those simple villagers were then butchered; that many of the girlish playmates of long ago have as women endured torture, shame and death.

The death of her husband, the massacre of 1895, the deportation of her son, events which followed each other within a year, almost crushed Mrs. Knapp's brave spirit. She returned to America in 1896. Here she found new service awaiting her, service in behalf of those she loved, and to it she gave herself unstintedly, self-sacrificingly, year after year.

Always keenly interested in affairs, keeping

in close touch with scores of old friends in all parts of the world, constantly making devoted new friends, youthful in her enthusiasms, physically active, she lived a full life to the very end.

Her grave lies under the shadow of the mighty Rockies, the grave of her husband under the shadow of the Taurus Mountains, half the width of the world away. The work they established has been destroyed—the people they loved and laboured for have been nearly annihilated, the son who most closely followed in their footsteps has died a martyr's death. But their spirit can never die out of the world; in the new Turkey, in the new Bitlis, it will live on. The little town, reconstructed by the surviving Armenians who call it home, and by the Americans helping them, will become the center of a work greater than the past has ever known that will civilize and Christianize the whole of Kurdistan.

XIV

GREATER LOVE HATH NO MAN

GEORGE PERKINS KNAPP in a unique sense laid down his life for his friends, the Armenians. He died *because* he loved them, literally. This is the firm conviction of those who know most about the circumstances of his last days.

With such a parentage as his, with a childhood and early boyhood spent in Bitlis, his only playmates and schoolmates—aside from brother and sisters—Armenian lads, it was perhaps not to be wondered at that when he came to America at the age of fourteen, he resolved to return to Bitlis after completing his education. Boy though he was when that resolve was made, he never changed his mind but held to that single purpose throughout his school and college life.

Working his way through Harvard he was graduated with the class of 1887 and entered Hartford Theological Seminary. During his

Junior year at college he became engaged to Anna Jay Hunt, daughter of Addison A. and Clara E. Thomas Hunt of Barre, Massachusetts, who was graduated from Mt. Holyoke Seminary in 1886 and taught in Salt Lake City under the New West Educational Commission until their marriage in July, 1890. A few weeks after the wedding, Mr. and Mrs. Knapp set sail for Turkey.

The people of Bitlis had a pleasant way of greeting new or returning missionaries; they would walk two or three miles out of the city to meet the travellers: the schoolboys and schoolgirls would line up on each side of the road, sing a song written for the occasion and present flowers, after which every one would press forward for a handshake and word of greeting.

An unusually large concourse turned out to meet "Mr. George" and his young wife. Middle-aged or old men who had known him as a boy, young men who had been his childhood playmates, were won to renewed and deeper affection by his quick recognition of old friends in spite of changes wrought by the intervening years, and by his ready use of the language he had not allowed himself to forget.

Such things mean more to Orientals than to other people; his deep and continued and sincere interest in individuals and in the race as a race wronged and oppressed, his sympathy, his appreciation of all that was admirable in Armenian character, customs, literature and religion completed his conquest of their hearts.

Four years after his coming something happened that increased this affection almost to hero-worship. Petty disturbances in the Sassun highlands west of Bitlis were magnified by Tahsin Pasha, governor of the vilayet, into a "rebellion" which was "suppressed" by him with fiendish cruelty. Refugees escaping to Bitlis brought stories of fearful atrocities perpetrated in those remote fastnesses. Afire with indignation and horror, Mr. Knapp wrote an account of what had happened and sent it to the *London Times*. Refugees escaped to Europe also and told their story there.

A commission of investigation was sent to Moush, the town nearest the Sassun district. Although Mr. Knapp's name had not appeared in connection with the *Times* article, the unlooked-for publicity the affair had gained was ascribed to him by both Turks and Armenians.

The latter—or rather some of the hot-headed young men among them—jubilant over the coming of the commission, were rather unwise in their demonstrations of gratitude and thus increased the newly aroused hostility towards him of the government officials.

It was believed in Bitlis, at least, at that time, that Europe, pledged to secure good government for the Armenians, would now begin to fulfill her promises. The massacres of 1895–96 proved how vain were these hopes.

The massacre in Bitlis took place in October, 1895. Many took refuge on the mission premises and here a number of the victims were buried. The Turks showed their animosity towards Mr. Knapp by more than one attempt to shoot him. At the very first, a Turkish mob rushed towards his house but was checked and finally dispersed by the intervention of the Kurdish neighbour who had been his father's friend and his own.

The massacres were represented by the Turkish Government as "uprisings" of the Armenians and due to Armenian revolutionary agents. After the secret arrangement between Russia and Turkey, made when the fleets of the Powers

had assembled in the Bay of Salonica, and the coercing of Turkey by a display of naval strength before Constantinople had almost been decided upon, it began to be "whispered" that the missionaries were at the back of the revolutionary agents and that upon them should fall the real blame for the blood shed by the Turks in "suppressing disorder." This was a plausible pretext for getting rid of them in order to make way for the priests of the Russian Church, as the first step in Russianizing the empire. The Sultan prepared an iradé providing for their expulsion.

It was decided to begin with Mr. Knapp. He was openly charged with inciting the Armenians of Bitlis to revolt, and although Mr. Hampson, the British vice-consul who had been sent to Bitlis after the massacres, reported that these charges were absurd, Mr. Knapp was summoned before the criminal court. On telegraphing to the American minister for instructions, he was told not to obey the summons. But during a temporary absence of the British consul he was "invited" to leave the city and a large guard came to his house to escort him to the coast.

Mr. Knapp went with them, believing that his

helpless people would be punished for resistance on his part. The Vali at Aleppo detained him five days trying to make him sign an agreement not to return to Bitlis under any circumstances. He steadily refused to sign, on the ground that the charges brought against him were entirely unfounded, and he was finally allowed to proceed, still treated as a prisoner, to Alexandretta.

Fortunately, Mr. John W. Riddle was then the United States chargé d'affaires at Constantinople, and took up the matter vigorously, aided and supported by Sir Philip Currie, the British ambassador. The Turkish Government promised to have the missionary delivered to the American consul at Alexandretta on his arrival there but the consul wired Mr. Riddle on April 23rd that the Alexandretta authorities had refused to give up Mr. Knapp and intended to expel him from Turkish territory by compelling him to embark on a steamer sailing for Europe April 24th. Mr. Riddle made energetic representation to the Turkish Government demanding that the latter respect its engagements, and in order to give emphasis to his remarks he telegraphed to the commander of the United States

cruiser, *Marblehead*, anchored at Mersina, to go to Alexandretta and place the cruiser at the disposal of the consul at that port. The Porte no sooner became aware of this telegram than orders were sent to Alexandretta for the release of Mr. Knapp.

The next step should have been to insist on Mr. Knapp's rights as an American citizen, to treat the charges brought against him as absurd, and to demand that he be permitted to return at once to his mission. Such action was taken by Sir Philip Currie in the case of Rev. F. W. MacCallum, who was also deported from his station some months later, but who was a British subject, a Canadian. The Porte immediately complied with the ambassador's demands. The cases of these two missionaries were object lessons in the difference between the policies of England and of the United States with respect to the status of their citizens abroad.[1] Dr. MacCallum returned immediately to his station; Mr. Knapp waited in Constantinople for a "trial," but in vain.

[1] These cases, however, put an end to the plan for the general expulsion of missionaries. The iradé referred to was never made public.

Finally he gave up the attempt to secure the trial and came to America, his wife and children and mother, who had left Bitlis soon after his deportation, having preceded him hither. For two years he worked hard to secure funds in this country for the care of thousands of Armenian orphans left desolate by the massacres.

In 1899 he returned to Turkey, going to Harpoot to take charge of fifteen hundred of these orphans. The mission here had suffered severely during the massacres; most of its buildings were in ruins. The orphans were scattered here and there where room could be found for them; Mr. Knapp bought land adjoining the mission premises, put up a building suitable for a home for the girls, centralized the preparation of food as an economical measure, and established a bakery which became a source of revenue as well as a saving of expense. The whole orphanage work was enlarged and splendidly organized. Rev. Thomas C. Richards, in an article published in *The Congregationalist* for December 9, 1915, gives some details concerning it:

"His perfect mastery of the language and intimate knowledge of Armenian ideals and

ideas made him just the man for the place. He secured financial help for the work in England and Switzerland and from Armenians in America who had great confidence in him.

"His aim was to help these orphans to help themselves. The boys were all taught some trade, tailoring, shoemaking, carpentering, and the like. The girls, besides learning to do all kinds of domestic work, were taught to weave ginghams and make thread lace. The late George C. Williams, president of the Chemical National Bank of New York, believed in Mr. Knapp and his work so much that he gave the funds to start a plant for the making of Oriental rugs. In the State Department at Washington is a magnificent specimen of the work accomplished. It is a double-faced silk rug in the form of an American flag, twelve feet by four, representing two years' work if done by one individual. On the flag is this inscription, 'Presented in gratitude to the United States Government by the Armenian Orphans of Harpoot, Turkey.'

"Much more might be written of the agricultural training, of the silk culture, of the mills and bakery that could turn the wheat into

bread, but enough has been shown of this one venture and relief measure to remind one of Cyrus Hamlin and his resourcefulness.

"In 1908 a massacre occurred at Adana and Minot Rogers was killed. At that time, by grape-vine telegraphy, news of an impending massacre came to Harpoot. Mr. Knapp's two daughters had gone to Ichme, a village five or six hours away, with a native Armenian pastor's family to spend their spring vacation. Convinced of the danger, George Knapp went to the Vali of Harpoot and found the most prominent Armenians in the city there on a like errand. The Governor pooh-poohed the idea of any danger; besides, he had sent four soldiers out there for protection. Finding the missionary determined to go that night to the village where his daughters were, the Vali gave him an escort of twenty soldiers and one officer. As day broke they reached Ichme to find the children and village safe.

"Why didn't you do it before? You can't, now the 'Hat-wearer' is come," said one of the soldiers to the Moslems, not realizing how well the missionary understood Turkish.

"The Kurds were massed in a ravine back of

the town. Another company were in the mosque. They had planned just as deadly and brutal work as actually happened at Adana, but were forestalled. The four soldiers sent the day before arrived much later in the day.

"Now, hardest of all, this father had to go back in a few hours to his post at Harpoot, for no one could foretell what would happen there. If he took his girls back with him, a panic would certainly follow. So he left those daughters of his, dearer than life to him, as hostages of peace and security. With two soldiers he went back and was in Harpoot on duty that night. A week later those girls came home under the escort of the brave Armenian pastor, whose courage had done much to stay the massacre until Mr. Knapp arrived. Who can tell the courage it took to leave those girls behind?

"All this was in the day's work to him. He was as modest as he was brave. Only by repeated cross-examination could one extract his story. He absolutely refused to be regarded as a hero, but he was one of the noblest.

"His ideals of duty never took himself into account. If he had so willed his great linguistic ability and his business enterprise might have

won him fame and fortune in the Near East. Nothing could tempt him from his service to his Master and his brother, the Armenian."

Mr. Knapp's efforts at Harpoot were not confined to the orphanages. He taught classes in the college and theological seminary, he toured the villages, he was station treasurer; indeed, he had too many kinds of work to do—the usual experience of missionaries in undermanned stations—and yet he was always reaching out to grasp new opportunities, try new experiments. A big farm on which the orphan boys in his charge should learn efficient Western methods of cultivating the soil was a project dear to his heart which he was forced to abandon.

With it all he never ceased to study, to perfect himself in the languages of the country, and a knowledge of the history, the customs, the prejudices of its people. He was always very patient with the Armenians, considerate, making allowances for their ignorance and the deteriorating effect of centuries of oppression on their character. He was not always patient or tactful with his associates, a little quick to criticize, somewhat hasty and impulsive in action and judgments.

But there never was a man more quick to acknowledge a mistake or fault, more eager to make reparation or apology; his humility was very great and very sincere.

In 1909 he came to America on furlough in time to be with his mother during the last month of her life. He returned to Turkey the following year, going to Bitlis, which greatly needed another missionary. His wife remained in America for the sake of their children, expecting to join him within a year, but was detained by circumstances. In 1914 she had engaged passage on a steamer to return to Turkey when the outbreak of the war caused all sailings to be cancelled by the Board.

During the awful events of June and July, 1915, in Bitlis, Mr. Knapp was tireless in his efforts to relieve suffering, and to mediate with the Turkish officials in behalf of his people. He had been "much respected by and acceptable to the Turks in a business and social way" during the whole of his missionary life, in spite of the 1896 experience, but now all was changed. The Turks were anxious to get rid of all inconvenient witnesses of what they had done to the Armenians. The story of their attempt to

deport all the Americans from Bitlis has been told in the eleventh chapter, together with the incident of the shot fired by the disguised Armenian, which was the pretext seized upon by the officials for sending off Mr. Knapp without delay.

He was allowed to take with him an Armenian boy and a Turkish servant. The latter returned from Sert.

"We waited in vain for a telegram from Diarbekir," wrote Miss McLaren. "The servant told us that Mr. Knapp planned to go to Harpoot as soon as he could get a conveyance. It was not until some time had passed that the doctor (Mustifa Bey) came and told us that it was reported that Mr. Knapp was ill in Diarbekir. This was only to prepare us for the worst, for in a moment or two he said that it was reported that Mr. Knapp had died of typhus. From his manner and the way he told the story, I judged that he felt that Mr. Knapp's death had not been a natural one. No very satisfactory reply to inquiries was ever received from the government. A doctor who claimed to have attended him gave a detailed account of the run of the fever and the pulse evidently

made up entirely by a man who knew little or nothing of typhus fever."

The Armenian boy was sent from Diarbekir to Harpoot at Consul Davis's demand but could give no information concerning the cause of Mr. Knapp's death. After investigation, both Dr. Atkinson of Harpoot and the American consul arrived at the conviction that it was not a natural one. The truth will probably never be known, but that he died the death of a martyr is practically certain. Dr. Andrus, Dr. Thom and Miss Fenenga, later deported from Mardin, were shown his grave by a soldier who claimed to be one of those who had borne him to his last resting place. It is a lonely and unmarked grave, but a cenotaph has been placed in the cemetery at Forest Hills, Boston, by his cousin, Mr. George B. Knapp, whose fatherly affection and interest followed him throughout his whole career. His life ended in the city where the missionary life of his parents began, but the manner of its end has made his memory not only especially dear and sacred to hundreds of survivors of the martyr race he loved and worked for but a vital influence in their lives. These lives will be his best eulogy.

XV

MISS McLAREN FALLS ILL; GERMAN OFFICERS VISIT BITLIS

THE girls and women who were permitted to remain in Bitlis on condition that they assist in the hospital, began to do washing, sewing and cooking for the soldiers, but in their own schoolhouse and under Miss Shane's supervision. The pastor's wife was very helpful in overseeing this work.

After Mr. Knapp was sent away it was reported that Miss Shane must go as soon as she was strong enough to travel. For several weeks her trunk was packed in readiness to leave at a moment's notice. One day the military commandant came to see Miss McLaren in company with Mustifa Bey; Miss Shane happened to step into the room and the commandant demanded the reason for her still being in Bitlis. Mustifa Bey said that she was still having fever and was not able to travel. This was true: she had overtaxed her strength

after her illness and her temperature had gone up to 102 and stayed there for several days. The explanation was accepted and the matter allowed to drop.

During the weeks when she thought she would have to leave, Miss Shane decided to ask the Vali if she might take some of her girls with her. She talked the matter over with the women and it was known that the pastor's daughter was one for whom she would make a special plea. But the girl herself came to Miss Shane's room with this request:

"Miss Shane, I hear that you are going to ask the Governor for permission to take me with you. If that is true, please do not, please ask him if you can take my mother. They think she has money and it is more dangerous for her to stay than for me."

The mother, a woman of great beauty of character, died August 27th of typhus.

Deegeen Heghene, Kevork Effendi's widow, had acted as Miss Shane's nurse during part of her illness, at the same time taking almost the entire responsibility for the care of the girls. Later she became her most valuable helper in the care of the orphans and of the household,

and often acted as her interpreter. Her quiet demeanour won the respect of all the Turks with whom they had to deal.

Not long after her husband's martyrdom her baby died. This was the only occasion on which she seemed to be unable to control her grief. It was heart-breaking to see her clinging to the dead child, kissing its cold face and calling its name. It was thought best she should not attend the burial service but her piteous cries followed the little coffin as it was carried out of her sight.

It seemed to Miss McLaren that her chief business that summer was burying the dead or seeing that it was done, preparing the bodies herself, often, because people were afraid of contracting typhus. After Sister Martha's death she resumed her work in the Turkish hospitals, of which there were ten or twelve in the neighbourhood which had to be visited every day.

In September she herself fell ill with typhus, was attended by a Syrian doctor on the hospital staff and nursed by Miss Shane and two Armenian girls.

The bankers who had fled from the city when the Turks evacuated it on the approach of the

Russians, a few days after their return called on the two ladies and told them that they would never forget the horror of what they had seen on the road. The Bitlis River, a shallow mountain stream, was filled, and the banks covered, with bodies in all stages of decomposition; bodies were lying on both sides of the road and sometimes the highway itself was obstructed by heaps of the dead. In one place, for the space of about two rods, the road was covered with corpses over which Turks would force their horses to go.

What had impressed them most was the sight of children alive and alone among the dead, wailing piteously for the help and comfort that could not come, or sitting quietly, too young to realize the horror of what had happened.

A few days before the bankers themselves had left the city a company of one thousand Armenian soldiers had been sent from Bitlis entrusted with government books and papers. They had been set upon and killed and their bodies left where they had fallen. The government archives were scattered all over the hillside.

Hundreds of the fleeing Moslem civilians died from illness and exposure. The Vali on one

occasion said to Miss McLaren: "All this suffering through sickness and war has come upon the Moslems as a just punishment from a righteous God, because of what we have done to the Armenians. Some of them deserved punishment but we went too far, and now God is punishing us for it." This conviction did not make him put an end to the atrocious treatment of women, however.

In the latter part of September he was replaced by a man who was proud of the fact that he had cleaned out the Christian population of Erzingan—a brother-in-law of Djevdet Bey.

In October two German officers on their way to Persia stopped at Bitlis with instructions to learn what had become of Sister Martha, as the German Embassy was unable to get any satisfactory answer to its telegrams. To these men were entrusted letters to her friends giving an account of her experiences in Bitlis, her last days and her dying messages, and these were safely delivered.

None of the Americans' letters were leaving the Bitlis post-office and their telegrams were changed and curtailed so that they often failed to convey the intended message. Therefore

Miss Shane asked the senior officer if he would get a letter to the American Embassy. He replied that he would send it to the German Embassy asking to have it passed on to the American. She thereupon wrote a fairly detailed account of the events of the few days preceding Mr. Knapp's deportation, and this letter also reached its destination.

These officers listened with interest to the story of what had taken place in Bitlis. They sent food to the women kept in prison in a starving condition, and later they gathered up children and brought them to the American ladies. Because of their evident sympathy for the Armenians they incurred the suspicion of the government and were constantly shadowed by spies.

XVI

MUSTIFA BEY AND THE SCHOOLGIRLS

AFTER the departure of the two young Armenian surgeons whose fate is described in the seventh chapter the hospitals had been left without a surgeon and this had caused a great deal of suffering. At last another doctor had said that he would do the best he could if Sister Martha would help him. She really knew more than he did and he would ask her how to make an incision and would follow her directions. After that he was obliged to perform all the operations, and unlike most Turkish doctors he did his best and improved noticeably. Later he was promoted to be superintendent of the hospitals.

This was Mustifa Bey, who saved the women and girls in the school by representing that he needed their assistance in the hospital. He was an Arab, had been educated in France and Germany, and said to the Americans on one occasion that he was ashamed of being an Ottoman

subject, was horrified by the massacres, and that if ever he had the opportunity he would give himself up to the Russians.

The responsibility he assumed was not a light one. As he saw a great deal of the other officials he knew that the presence of the girls in the school was a constant thorn in the flesh to the government. The girls were better educated than the majority of Armenian girls and many of them were very attractive; the military officers stationed in the town constantly brought pressure to bear on the authorities to deport them in order that they might be able to take their pick of them.

"At one time," wrote Miss Shane, "it really seemed as if they would have to go and Mustifa Bey seemed quite stirred up over the situation. He told me that the government was continually finding fault with him because so many soldiers in the hospital were dying, but it would not give him the material to work with nor the necessary help. He had been feeling rebellious for some time past, but when the Governor said the girls must be taken away he was aroused to the point of resistance. He told me that unless I feared that Miss McLaren and myself might

become involved in case the government attempted to take the girls, he would gather his hospital forces and resist. He had stood all he cared to stand from the government, had begged to be allowed to resign his position as hospital superintendent; had even remained in his house two days feigning illness to avoid responsibility under such circumstances, but he could not do this indefinitely and he might as well meet his fate defending his own rights.

"I told him that as far as the government was concerned the girls had really been placed under his protection, and that if he opposed their being taken on the ground that he needed their assistance I hardly saw how we could be held responsible—the decision was his to make, and I would be more than willing to have him resist any attempt to take the girls when the matter came to a final issue.

"Before he spoke to me he had written to Djevdet Bey to countermand the order for the taking of the girls. No answer had come and several days of uncertainty had passed. In the meantime the two German officers had arrived in the city and had called. I regretted not having appealed to them on the subject and wrote

a letter to the senior officer explaining the situation and asking him to use his influence with the Governor. He and his aide called again, said they were on their way to see the Vali and thought it best that I go with them that we might present the matter together. Miss McLaren was just recovering from typhus at the time and could not go with us.

"We found Djevdet Bey with the Governor and after some discussion the former gave his assurance that the girls would be allowed to remain as long as they were assisting in the hospitals. The Governor also gave his consent. Djevdet Bey later complained to Miss McLaren because Mustifa Bey had thought it necessary to get him mixed up in the affair by writing the letter, but on this occasion he did not seem averse to assuming responsibility for the decision.

"We could never be certain that Djevdet Bey would not change his mind even if he sincerely meant what he said at this time and of this we could not be sure. He was in the city only occasionally and then for short periods of time and the Vali always kept us in a state of uncertainty.

"Commander Khaleel Bey sent word from Moush that he needed more doctors and Bitlis must furnish its quota. Mustifa Bey appealed to higher authorities in Erzerum and was told not to send any as they were needed in Bitlis. Khaleel Bey replied that if they were not sent his men would come and take them by force. The hospital building opposite us was prepared for the siege. The girls were in the school building and all doors and gates were barred. However, Khaleel Bey thought better of his decision to use force and we escaped being dangerously near a scene of battle.

"Complaint was constantly being made that the girls were not doing enough to warrant their staying. Mustifa Bey said that he himself was placed in a very embarrassing situation, that he was being made the butt of ridicule and censure for keeping the girls. Since he could not guarantee their ultimate safety he could not understand why I would not allow them to become the wives of officers who wanted them. I told him that our religion did not sanction this, that there was not a girl in the school who was not free to become the wife of a Turk if she chose to do so, but that I was staying in Bitlis

for the very purpose of preventing their being forced into Turkish homes against their will.

"That he did not attempt to make the situation easier for himself by forcing the girls to marry Turks is to his credit. Later, however, he insisted on having seven girls as assistants in the operating room. Up to this time the girls had been working in the school building under my supervision and I disliked the idea of their going out among the Turks. When I objected he became very angry, said it was necessary that their work should be more in evidence if they were to be allowed to stay; he needed their assistance; if I did not give my consent he would not employ them in the hospital longer, and the government could do what it pleased with them.

"Later he seemed ashamed of his show of anger, said I could choose those who were to assist him, and assured me that they would be treated with respect and that I was free to visit the operating room often to see how they were getting along. I chose seven of the teachers, young women who had been brought up from their early years under the care of the Ely sisters, and said to them:

"'The real test has now come for you. If you cannot make the Turk realize that there is a vital difference between your religion and his, your principles and his; that there is something in you which makes it impossible for you to descend to his plane of living and thinking, and that you do not shrink from death when the question of principle and loyalty to your religion is at stake, your only means of protection is gone and any breaking down of barriers means danger for yourselves and all the others.'

"The girls never had cause for complaint. Miss McLaren in her work in the hospital often had occasion to visit the operating room and she reported that they were faring well and were getting some valuable training.

"Some of the women were sent out to the more distant hospitals to work. They were kindly and respectfully treated, with the exception of a few who were sent to the monastery outside of the city which was used as a hospital for convalescents. These women were in constant danger until Mustifa Bey was prevailed upon to replace the superintendent of this work by a more trustworthy man."

XVII

MISS McLAREN AND MISS SHANE OBLIGED TO LEAVE BITLIS

THE two ladies could send out no letters and but few telegrams. In November the American ambassador at Constantinople urged them to leave. Three telegrams were sent in reply stating that they were remaining voluntarily and did not wish to go, but he thought these telegrams not genuine, sent an order for them to go to Harpoot, and had the American consul in that city send his kavass to Bitlis to accompany them.

Miss McLaren and Miss Shane left Bitlis on November 30th. Women and children were still being hunted from house to house throughout the city and a few days earlier the two ladies had seen a number held under guard in the open without food or shelter, huddled together in small groups. Their faces did not seem human, so emaciated were they with hunger and suffering.

The road to the south had been partially cleared up in October, just before some German officials were expected to pass that way, going to Mosul, but evidences of the summer's work were still to be seen; in every gully were the remains of human bodies.

While the ladies were in Diarbekir a new massacre took place, and during the next two days they saw bodies lying on or near the road, some of them stripped of their clothing, many terribly mutilated; the faces of three in one group had been so mutilated that no features were discernible and the bodies were one mass of gashes. A dog was standing over one body; as the travellers drew near they could see that he had already gnawed a part of the flesh from the bones.

They passed the spot where the men had evidently been led off the road. It was far from any village, a wild desolate hilly region, with enormous jagged rocks covering the hillsides. At this point some had evidently tried to escape the torture and death that awaited them in the ravines. They had been shot and left where they fell; many bodies were in plain view, of others an arm or a leg could be seen projecting

from behind some rock. Further on was the body of an old white-haired woman lying near the road, a deep gash in her forehead.

All along the way were seen villages completely destroyed by fire.

The travellers passed a group of at least fifty men who were marching along under guard, and were told that these, too, were soon to be killed. They were all that had been left of a very large party of Armenian soldiers who had come from Erzerum. Two of the Erzerum mission schoolboys had been with them but succeeded in escaping and found refuge as helpers in the American hospital at Harpoot.

Miss McLaren assisted in this hospital after her arrival in Harpoot, Miss Shane in the girls' school and among the Armenian refugees from further north.

In the summer of 1917 after the breaking of diplomatic relations with the United States, they left with the Harpoot missionaries for America. Not until they reached Switzerland did they learn the truth about what had taken place in Van in the spring of 1915, and that there had been no " rebellion " there.

They had known that the entire population

of the town and province had fled into the Caucasus when the Russian army retreated in August, for Djevdet Bey had entered the evacuated city and later returned to Bitlis. He told Miss McLaren that Mrs. Ussher had died of typhus in July and he had spoken with deep feeling of the kindness shown by the missionaries towards the Moslem refugees whom they had cared for on their premises during the Russian occupation.

"I can never forget it," said he.

XVIII

SEQUELS

AGAIN the Russians entered Turkey, occupied Van and pushed westward, reaching Tadvan once more about the last of January, 1916. It took the army a month to cross the plain, eighteen miles in width, between Tadvan and Bitlis. About midway a terrible battle was fought and the noise of it was heard in the city.

Mustifa Bey, faithful to his trust, had refused to yield to the great pressure brought to bear on him to make him give up the schoolgirls left in his charge. A few, fearing a worse fate, had consented to become the wives of Turkish officers, and two whom he had sent south, assuring them of safety in the home of his brother in Aleppo, were stopped at Diarbekir and obliged to work in the military hospital there. But up to this time he had succeeded in protecting the rest from molestation.

When the Russians drew near the city, however, the Turks slaughtered in the most brutal manner—with axes instead of with bullets or bayonets—the few women who had not as yet been deported, and Djevdet sent word to Mustifa Bey that he must give up his charges to be put to death. Mustifa Bey in an effort to postpone the evil hour made illness an excuse for not obeying at once, saying he would attend to the matter on the morrow. He then went to the girls and bid them prepare for a long journey, as they were to be sent into exile at last.

It may be supposed they had no thought of sleep that night as they busied themselves following his instructions. About an hour after midnight they were startled by the sudden noise of battle in the city itself. The furious firing seemed to be almost under their very windows, as the schoolhouse stood near the edge of the bluff overlooking the most densely built-up part of the town. The girls believed that the regular troops were engaged with plundering hordes of Kurds, and when there came a thunderous knocking at their gate at five o'clock in the morning they thought that either a band of these Kurds had come to ravish and kill or that

the Turkish soldiers were about to hurry them "down the road."

"Open! We are friends—Armenians."

Trembling, they obeyed, to find outside a band of Armenian Volunteers, part of the advance guard of the Russian army, which, by sliding down the trackless, snow-covered hills surrounding Bitlis, had taken the Turks by surprise and captured the city. The Moslems who did not succeed in escaping were put to death, but Mustifa Bey's life was spared through the intercession of the girls whom he had protected. A week later these girls were taken to Van, where some of them remained till the second evacuation of the province, while a few went on almost immediately to the Caucasus.

Among the Armenian Volunteers who captured Bitlis were two young men originally natives of Kultig, a large village not far from the city, which, like all the other villages of the vilayet, had suffered from massacre and deportation, but some weeks later than the rest. One of these young men, Caspar, by bribing a Turkish friend, managed to elude the soldiers surrounding his home, and after remaining concealed in the mountains for a while, succeeded

in escaping to the Russian army, then very near the city. When it retreated he went with it to Russia, to return as a volunteer in 1916.

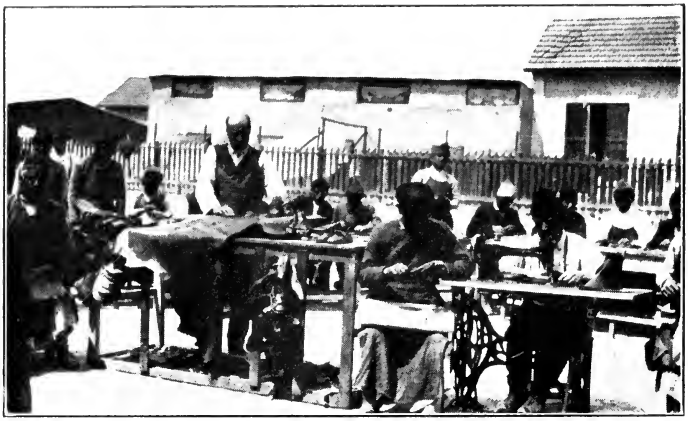
The other young man, Levone, had emigrated to America some years before. After the war broke out he started for Russia with the intention of fighting in the Russian army against the Turks. He sailed on the *Lusitania* and when that ship was sunk was saved by a piece of timber by means of which he kept himself afloat for hours until rescued. After which he carried out his original intention and was with the Russian army which raised the siege of Van in May, 1915. Not sent on to Bitlis at this time with the troops that never reached their objective, he entered his old home with a victorious army ten months later.

These Kultig men married two of the rescued schoolgirls who were sisters. Levone Seferian, after a three months' stay in Van, brought his wife, Lucia, on to New York. The other young couple remained behind and no word has been received from them since. If living they are probably in the Russian Caucasus, where there are now 330,000 Armenian refugees. In August, 1915, there were about 250,000 refugees from

the evacuated Van province and about 100,000 from the Erzerum and Bitlis provinces and their condition—homeless, starving, strangers in a strange land—was desperate indeed.

The Russian Government gave a bread ration for a while, but it was the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief that organized permanent and really efficient relief in this congested district. It sent there Mr. Richard Hill, late in 1915, and soon after Dr. Samuel Wilson from Persia; both were American missionaries. Dr. F. W. MacCallum of the Constantinople Mission and Mr. George F. Gracey of Ourfa went there early in 1916 and were joined some months later by Dr. George C. Raynolds and Rev. and Mrs. Ernest A. Yarrow, formerly of the Van Mission, and Rev. and Mrs. Harrison A. Maynard, who had left Bitlis for their furlough in May, 1915.

Mr. and Mrs. Maynard found in the Caucasus the women and girls who had so strangely survived the tragedy of Bitlis. Deegeen Heghene became matron of an orphanage. Pastor Khachig's daughter and her little brother were taken into another orphanage. The little tot who was rescued from deportation and inevi-



Shoe-making.

Lace-work

Industrial Relief of the American Committee for Relief in the Near East.

table death by a Turk but would have none of him and was consigned to the care of an Armenian woman (see p. 66) was among those who were saved.

The Americans immediately began to organize industrial relief. Crude wool and cotton were bought and cleansed, carded, spun, woven and made into garments and blankets by refugees, for refugees. Refugees made spinning-wheels, handlooms, sandals and, later, farm implements. Every dollar of relief money was thus made to do the work of two. Every individual employed supported a family averaging five or six members. The aged, infirm and helpless were given money and needy widows with children to support were given a small sum monthly for each child. Children were taught trades; a small hospital was opened and a daily clinic held by Dr. Kennedy, who had been sent out by the Lord Mayor of London's Committee for Armenian Relief. Another Englishman who worked with the American Committee most efficiently was Mr. Thomas Dann Heald of Bristol, while Mr. Backhouse and Mr. Catchpool of the Lord Mayor's Committee cooperated with it in friendly and effective fash-

ion. In 1917 Messrs. Compton, Elmer, Partridge, James, White, Williams, Mrs. White, Mrs. Compton and Miss Orvis were sent from America to assist in the work which had reached proportions beyond the strength of those who had originally organized it. Had not their Armenian superintendents been men trained in the mission work of Van—educated, capable, trustworthy men, filled with the spirit of service and coöperation, the task of the Americans would have been an almost impossible one.

Russia's separate peace with Germany spelled catastrophe to the relief work. The American consul at Tiflis, Mr. F. Willoughby-Smith, sent the American workers away. Wrote Mr. Yarrow later:

"The following argument put forth by the consul, I think appealed to us all and it was on this ground that we decided to leave. It seemed most likely that the Germans had designs on the Caucasus and if they sent even a small force from Odessa there was nothing to oppose them. Then our being with the Armenians would do them more damage than good. We would immediately be interned, our equipment confiscated and probably the activity of the Com-

mittee be entirely stopped. On the other hand, if we should withdraw and leave the work of the Committee in the hands of local Armenian committees the Germans might allow them to continue. And the consul assured us that he could arrange for the transfer of funds through the Swedish consul or some other neutral agency. I think it was harder for us to come away than it would have been to stay, but we tried to weigh the question calmly and logically and I still believe we decided wisely. The situation was entirely different from the one we faced in Van three years before.[1] We were warned then of what was to happen and with our eyes open we decided to stay and share the fate of the people with whom we had lived and worked for so many years, but now our position was entirely different. We were in a land foreign to ourselves and to the refugees to whom we were ministering. We had given them all our strength and intelligence, but new conditions over which we had no control made it impossible to help further; on the contrary, our presence with them might be a real element of danger to their security, and with heavy hearts

[1] See Dr. Ussher's "An American Physician in Turkey."

but free consciences we left the work to which we had been giving the best that was in us."

The party left Erivan March 19th. The chance of getting anywhere with a whole skin seemed very uncertain; the train was searched at every stop by the Tartars; the stations were almost all destroyed and villages were burning all along the way.

Mr. James Arroll and Mr. John Elder, two young Americans, had been doing Y. M. C. A. work among the soldiers in the Caucasus for a short time. They secured consent from the district secretary to remain a while at least. Mr. Heald remained for a few days in Erivan to complete the transfer of the work to the Armenian Committees aided by Mr. McDowell of the Persian Branch of the Relief, then in British service, and Mr. Gracey who had become a captain in the British army. Mr. Heald left Tiflis on the last train allowed to pass by the Tartars, Mr. McDowell was ordered to Alexandropol and Captain Gracey to Tiflis. (He was afterwards made prisoner by the Bolshevists and not set free till late in the spring of 1919.) One of the two Y. M. C. A. men became very ill,

the other cared for him; on his recovery they divided the relief work between them.

So the industrial relief at Erivan was never discontinued, the orphanages and hospital never closed, throughout all the changes that took place in that harassed region during the next few months, though, at one time, informed by the Armenian Dictator, Aram Pasha, that Erivan would be in Turkish hands before many days, Mr. Arroll and Mr. Elder prepared to leave. But the tide of battle at Sadar Abad turned and Erivan was saved.

Consul Willoughby-Smith left the relief work in Tiflis in charge of Madame Plavsky, a Russian lady, and her assistant, Mr. Booman, who was a Lett. Mr. Montesanto, vice-consul at Vladikavkaz, cared for the refugees fleeing from the Caucasus into Russia, of whom over fifty thousand passed through this opening in the great mountain barrier between the two continents: food and medical assistance was given to thousands, milk to the children and the sick.

When the armistice was signed Mr. Maynard at once dropped the relief work in Persia in which he had engaged not long after leaving the Caucasus, and hastened back to Erivan.

Mr. Yarrow left Army Y. M. C. A. work in Vladivostok and travelled thither via India and Egypt. The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief in the meantime planned a great work of relief and reconstruction in the Near East—where, by the way, it is entitled the American Committee for Relief in the Near East, or the A. C. R. N. E. It sent out early in January, 1919, a Relief Commission of seven, headed by Dr. James L. Barton, to investigate conditions and organize relief. President Main of Grinnell College was the Relief Commissioner for the Caucasus. He cabled to New York early in April:

"I have been handling refugee concentration along the former boundary line between Russian and Turkish Armenia. Alexandropol, a large center, and Etchmiadzin, a small one, are typical. In the one are 68,000 refugees by actual census at our bread and soup kitchens. In the other are 7,000. Refugees have streamed into these places hoping to find it possible to cross the border into their former homes in Turkish Armenia near Kars. Concentration at these two places and many others without food or clothing and after a winter of exile in the

Caucasus and beyond has produced a condition of horror unparalleled among the atrocities of the great war. On the streets of Alexandropol on the day of my arrival 192 corpses were picked up. This is far below the average per day. One-seventh of the refugees are dying each month. . . .

"The refugees dare not go forward. They halt on the borderland of their home. The Turks, the Kurds and the Tartars have taken possession of their land and will hold it by force of arms. A line almost like a battle line from the Black Sea region, where is located the Southwestern Republic with Kars as its capital, to the Caspian Sea, where Baku is the capital of the Azerbeijan Republic, together with a line of Turks, Kurds and Tartars between these two extremes, holds the refugees where they are. The total number is more than 330,000. To these must be added the local inhabitants also suffering indescribable hardships. The world appears to be unconscious of the overwhelming human tragedy that is being enacted in the Caucasus. The Turk and his racial confederates are carrying forward with growing efficiency the policy of extermination developed

during the war by the method of starvation. Starvation is aided by typhus, and already, as if in anticipation of the hot season, cholera is developing. . . ."[1]

Later in January forty relief workers, all men, sailed on the *Pensacola*, which carried a cargo of food, clothing, medical supplies, hospital units, ambulances, etc., for the sufferers in the Near East. Among the workers was Dr. Ussher of the Van Mission, and on their arrival in Constantinople he was sent with several new men up into the Caucasus.

The *Caesar*, the *Mercurius*, the *Western Belle* and the *Newport News* have in quick succession carried out supplies of food, clothing and everything needed for relief and rehabilitation. On

[1] Cables sent from the Caucasus June 1st and 7th state: "First relief and food ships momentarily checking tide starvation and death. Increased and continuous aid imperative. Repatriation into Turkish Armenia beginning." "Conservative estimates British and our Committee read amount immediately needed Caucasus $1,500,000 monthly. Committee only relief. Situation worse daily." "History has no record of human suffering on such a scale."

Mr. Hoover has cooperated with the Committee in every possible way but his organization is scheduled to go out of existence July 1, 1919. Mr. Yarrow has been appointed Deputy Commissioner for the Caucasus with oversight of Erzerum, Van and Bitlis when these are opened up.

the *Leviathan* sailed in February about two hundred and fifty more relief workers—doctors, nurses, expert agriculturists and mechanics, sanitary engineers and civil engineers, with other technically trained men and women, teachers and orphanage workers, and smaller groups have followed these from time to time.[1] Miss Shane went out on the *Leviathan.* Miss McLaren also intends to return to Turkey when she has completed the nurses' training course she entered upon soon after her return to this country.

This is the program of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief: first, to save the lives of the thousands upon thousands of the victims of Turkish cruelty who are now starving to death; next, to repatriate the deported exiles (as well as the exiles in the Caucasus who were not deported, but fled from their homes) who since the armistice was signed have been striving to return to their homes from the desert where they have been wandering for three years; to help them rebuild their houses,

[1] J. Herbert Knapp, brother of George Knapp, went out as a civil engineer with a group of relief workers that sailed June 24, 1919.

many of which have been destroyed; to supply peasants with seed and farm implements so that they may gain their own living from the soil and avert famine from the whole country; to supply artisans with the few tools and the small sum of money which would in a very short time enable them to support their families; to create industries by which the thousands of women left without male relatives may support themselves; most important of all, to care for the *children*, most of them orphans, so efficiently, so wisely, that they may become a great asset in the economic, intellectual, social and spiritual development of the country. The reconstruction of Turkey, the "key to the Old World," is in the hands of American philanthropy.

Here is one example of the problems the A. C. R. N. E. has to solve: "The present movement by which the Turks are releasing women and children who have been sequestered in their homes is almost startling in its sweep across the country, putting upon us enormous responsibilities. There is no other organization in the country to meet this situation. While native communities are doing everything in their power to take in these discharged people

and give them a home, they find it impossible to do anywhere near what is necessary to do, and all parties turn to us. It is pathetic to see the way in which all classes of people look upon this Commission as almost sent from heaven to save this stricken land from ruin."

From the one town of Aintab 30,000 were driven out into the desert to die, and now there are, so far as can be ascertained, only 4,000 or 5,000 alive. Whether this proportion holds true for the rest of Turkey we cannot tell. Undoubtedly more of the former inhabitants of Van are still living than of any other Armenian city. And of Bitlis, alas! the fewest. In the fall of 1915 the government of that city had issued a proclamation that all men who were in hiding could come out, would be forgiven (!) and set to work. Some did come out of their holes looking like skeletons risen from the grave. What their ultimate fate was Miss McLaren and Miss Shane do not know and aside from these they know of but one or two who escaped massacre.

Although few survivors may return to Bitlis, it is of the utmost importance that the town should be fully rehabilitated. It has been said

that it is the "door between highlands and lowlands," the avenue of communication between the northern and northeastern plateaus and the Mesopotamian plains, between Persia and the coast of the Mediterranean. The strategical value of its position is therefore immense from the economic point of view; from the spiritual point of view no less great, for from this center the Kurds of Eastern Turkey can be most readily reached, civilized, Christianized, and for the sake of the future of Turkey this must be done.

The tragedy of Bitlis was one of the cruelest of the war. May the future of the little town be a future of such peace, prosperity, far-reaching, civilizing influence and steady growth in righteousness as to compensate in some measure for the hideous suffering of the past.

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