

The Condition of Armenia

**A report of the investigation into the treatment
of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1890-1895
by E. J. Dillon**



As published in *The Contemporary Review*,
August 1895 with notes and photographs added by AGRC

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February 2002

Notes on Emil Joseph Dillon

Christopher Walker, in his book *Visions of Ararat* writes: "The truth about the repression of Armenians became known, owing to the persistence of some journalists, chief of whom was the Irishman E. J. Dillon. He was a brilliant linguist and scholar, fluent in about 12 languages (including Zend). Working for the *London Daily Telegraph*, he was also a dedicated investigator, whom no governmental wile could block. He reached Armenia disguised as a Russian officer ¹, and wrote a devastating account of conditions there for *The Contemporary Review* in 1895."

And from the *Literary Digest* reporting the death of Dillon in 1933 we have the following interesting cameo of Dillon in an article entitled "**The Adventurous Dr. Dillon**":



Photo of E.J.Dillon from the
Literary Digest, 1933

Disguised as an Armenian woman, or as a Greek monk, or as a Cossack chieftain, or as whatever kind of person the emergency demanded, Emile Joseph Dillon could find out anything anywhere. Until his death in Spain the other day, he was reckoned Europe's most amazing newspaper correspondent. He used to say that he owed his passion for disguising himself to amateur theatricals when he was a schoolboy.

At the age of twelve I had to appear as an old man of seventy. By retaining my make-up after the play, I completely deceived one of my masters, who really took me for an old man. From that moment disguise became one of my hobbies, and it has been of immense use to me." Just so. He could witness an Armenian massacre, interview Turkish brigands, revisit Russia after having denounced the Soviets. Not even the turn of his tongue betrayed him, as he spoke countless languages perfectly, among them Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, and Zend. The *London Daily Telegraph*, which took him on in 1887, says, "The record of his services for this paper reads like chapters out of Marco Polo or Mandeville. The Turks tried to poison him. In China in 1900 he was nearly drowned in the Pei-ho while describing the Allied operations."

His capacity for work was nothing short of stupendous. In France, he reported the dramatic trial of Dreyfus at Rennes, writing daily from three to six columns with his own hand. According to the *London Evening Standard*, Count Witte "made" Dr. Dillon, and "when Witte fell, Dillon fell too. He never recaptured his position - and never forgot it." At the Peace Conference, among politicians who did not take him at his own valuation, he was an obviously disappointed man. Dr. Dillon had more reason to be vain than most men. Sometimes, too, his vanities were very human. For example, he loved to display a gold cased fountain-pen which had signed the Treaty of Portsmouth, the Treaty of London, the Treaty of Bucharest.

Whenever a treaty was about to be signed, the intrepid Irishman would step forward and place his pen gently into the signatory's hand. After the signing, he would take it back, put it carefully into his pocket, and reward the statesman with a duplicate.

¹ Dillon used many different disguises. On September 1, 1895, pg 20, *The New York Times* published an extensive article reporting his findings in Armenia under the heading "The Armenian Situation" and showed Dillon dressed in full Kurdish disguise, which allowed him to travel through the area freely [see page 4]. Photographs of Mr. Dillon have been added by AGRC, [ed].

THE CONDITION OF ARMENIA

by E. J. Dillon 1895

A PRETTY story is told of a little girl, who, fearing to lie in bed in the dark, begged her mother not to take the candle away until sleep should render it needless. "What are you afraid of, darling?" asked the strong-minded parent. "Of darkness," was the reply. "But remember, dear, that God is here in the room with you, and God is light itself. He will stay with you all night to keep you company." The silence that followed this dogmatic announcement seemed to show that the intended effect had been produced, until it was softly broken by the sweet voice of the child: "Then, please mamma, take God away and leave the candle."



Portrait of E.J. Dillon from The Review of Reviews, October 1904

The attitude of the Armenian population in Turkey towards the humane peoples of Western Europe who, to fiendish tortures and bloody massacres, hopefully oppose well-timed expressions of righteous indignation and moral sympathy, offers considerable analogy to the frame of mind of that untutored child. "We can dispense with your sympathy and pity if only you guarantee us security for life and property." So reasons the grateful Armenian. The impartial outsider, acquainted with the horrible condition of country and people, would naturally go a step further, and fearlessly affirm that the expression of sympathy at public meetings, followed, as in England, by supine inactivity, is not merely inferior to effective material aid, but is positively disastrous.

Formerly the Turks disliked the Armenians, and the blood-bath of Sassoun offers a fair indication of the vehemence of their feeling. At present, after the wanton humiliation inflicted upon them by the European friends of their victims they loathe the very name of Armenia, and deem no cruelties sufficient to satisfy their outraged self-love. The Vali (Governor-General) of Erzeroum, when the foreign consuls of that city lately brought an unusually crying case of injustice to his notice, told the Dragomans that the Turkish Government and the Armenian people stood to each other in the relation of husband and wife, and that outsiders who felt pity for the wife when her husband maltreated her, would do wisely and well to abstain from interfering. And the remark is quite true, "if the pair are to go on living together;" for the brutal husband can always choose his own time and place to vent his feelings on his helpless mate. And this is what is actually being done in Turkish Armenia.

Under the eyes of the Russian, English, and French delegates at Moush, the witnesses who had the courage to speak the truth to the representatives of the Powers were thrown into prison, and not a hand was raised to protect them; and at the present moment, within a stone's throw of the foreign consuls and missionaries, loyal Armenians are being hung up by the heels, the hair of their heads and beards plucked out one by one, their bodies branded with red-hot irons and defiled in beastly ways that can neither be described nor hinted at in England, their wives dishonored in their presence, and their daughters raped before their eyes. And all that the philanthropic English nation has to offer these its *protegés*, is eloquent indignation and barren sympathy. Would it not have been much more benevolent to hush up the massacre

of Sassoun and ignore the Pits of Death than to irritate the Turk to the point of madness and then leave him free to vent his fury upon Christians who are shielded only by our sentimental eloquence?

What reason the Armenians have to feel grateful to this country is a mystery which threatens to prove insoluble unless indeed we define gratitude to be a lively sense of favours to come. For the net result of our interference with Russia in 1878, if considered from a purely philanthropic point of view, was to



Mr. Dillon in Kurdish Disguise

New York Times September 1, 1895

perpetuate a system of horrors in the five Armenian provinces compared with which those of Negro slavery in the Southern States were literally light blemishes. We solemnly abolished purgatory and deliberately connived at the inauguration of hell. We undertook to see that the abuses engendered by misgovernment in the Armenian cantons of Turkey should be speedily and definitely swept away; and not merely have we neglected to fulfil this self-imposed duty, with which we refused to entrust Russia, but we have allowed a loose system of misrule gradually to develop into a diabolical policy of utter extermination, without venturing to make our power felt, or daring to recognize our impotence. Even the massacre of Sassoun, which provoked such wild outbursts of indignation among English-speaking peoples, has had no more tangible effect upon our late Liberal Government than that of stirring them up to increase the number of letters, telegrams, and consular reports.

It is perfectly true, though not perhaps generally known, that the Liberal Cabinet were in possession of the main facts of that butchery as long ago as last September, and left nothing undone to conceal them from the public from that time to the day of their resignation; and it is notorious that the wretched Armenians are being hounded down and vivisected with even greater cruelty at present. We are still cheerfully waiting for something to turn up. The responsibility for this wanton waste of time should, we are told by certain well-informed politicians, fall upon the shoulders of Russia, whose “underhand scheming” is rendering the energetic efforts of England

abortive. The wily ways of Muscovite diplomatists are too well known to need comment a vague hint is deemed sufficient; the intelligent public can be trusted to draw a pretty accurate picture for itself.

“What hinders you from going to school this morning, George?” asked a mild mother of her wayward boy one fine summer’s morning. “The mud, mother.” “The mud? You are dreaming, child. The streets are perfectly clean; where is the mud?” “It is too deep for detection, mother.” The same thing may be predicated of the underhand scheming of the Russian Government.

I speak in the light of facts. I have seen and conversed with the official representatives of that Power in various parts of Turkey. I have watched their work, observed their methods, and have had exceptionally trustworthy data for forming an opinion as to the attitude they assume on this question of the Sassoun massacre the only issue as yet before the Powers and I have not the slightest hesitation in affirming that, whatever obstacles our Government may have encountered in the work of assisting Armenia, none of them took their origin in Muscovite intrigues. Russia acceded to our request to inquire into the Sassoun massacre, and accomplished exactly and conscientiously everything she promised. No efforts were spared by her representatives to clear up the question; no personal prejudices or political interests were allowed to stand in the way of thorough investigation; men who personally dislike the Armenians and

admire the Moslems unhesitatingly raised their voices in favour of the latter; without wantonly irritating the Turks, with whom they are on more friendly terms than ourselves, they revealed the whole truth, and Russia can now afford to await further developments and complications with the interest of an intelligent observer.

The Armenian problem has, no doubt, a political side, regarding which it is impossible to say what the views of Russia are likely to be, but it is natural to assume that the present Tsar will be guided in his policy solely by considerations of justice and benevolence. One may say, however, without any hesitation that Great Britain ought to treat the Armenian Question on the basis either of pure politics or of pure benevolence. We cannot do both. We ought not openly to offer alms, and secretly endeavor to obtain the market rate of interest on the sum ostensibly given away; build a house for the roofless and stipulate that it shall be used as a protection for ourselves and a barrier against the advance of possible enemies, whom we continue to treat as friends, and whom we invite to help us in the work of reconstruction. Russia's attitude is absolutely correct; what is more, it is highly benevolent; for she has given hospitality to nearly 20,000 Armenian refugees, whereas we who are morally responsible for the weltering chaos that prevails on her borders, have turned away the sufferers with naught but gaseous sympathy and frothy promises.

And yet the duty of this country is simplicity itself ; we should either put a speedy end to the horrors of Turkish Dahomey or publicly proclaim our inability to fulfill our obligations in Armenia, at the same time repudiating our gigantic engagement to maintain the integrity of the Turkish Empire in Asia. For as it was a grievous blunder to raise this Armenian Question last winter without having first made sure that we could work it out to a satisfactory issue, it is little less than a crime to give the Turks the needful time to carry out their nefarious plans by our obstinate refusal to look the facts in the face.

Those who are familiar with the condition of the five provinces and their Christian inhabitants will unhesitatingly acquiesce in this view of the subject; for those who are not, the following brief sketch may prove instructive. Turkey's real sway in Armenia dates from the year 1847, when Osman Pasha gave the final *coup de grace* to the secular power of the Koordish Derebeks in the five southeastern provinces (Van, Bitlis, Moush Bayazed, and Diarbekir). During that long spell of nearly fifty years, we can clearly distinguish two periods: one of shameful misgovernment (1847-1891), and the other (1892-1894) of frank extermination. Suasion or remonstrance may do much to remedy the abuses that flow from the former system; force alone can achieve anything against the latter. And in this sense Lord Salisbury's recently expressed view of the matter is absolutely correct.

In the year 1891 the Sublime Porte, fearing serious dangers from the promised introduction of reforms into Armenia, and from the anticipated hostility in war time of the Christians living in provinces bordering upon Russia, resolved to kill two birds with one stone, and created the so-called Hamidieh cavalry, composed exclusively of Koords. It was an application of the principle on which rebels and rioters throw open the prison doors and invite convicts to rob and kill the members of the upper classes. The plan as propounded by some of the highest officials of the Empire was that the Armenians were to be driven out of the border lands, such as **Alashkerd**, their places to be taken by Mohammedans, that their numbers in all the five provinces were to be so considerably reduced that the need of special reforms for them should pass away, and that in case of war the Koords should act as a counterweight to the Cossacks.²

² An Austrian military attaché intercepted some telegrams of Ottoman provincial governors sent to the Sultan. He later translated and quoted them in his memoirs, published twenty five years later in Austria. One of them by an Ottoman provincial governor says: "Your excellency, in accordance with your wishes, Armenians are now in the minority everywhere in the province." [ed. AGRC]

This plain policy of extermination has been faithfully carried out and considerably extended from that day to this, and unless speedily arrested, will undoubtedly lead to a final solution of the Armenian problem, but a solution which will disgrace Christianity and laugh civilization to scorn. The enlisted Koords were left in their native places, exempted from service, supplied with arms, invested with the inviolability of ambassadors, and paid with the regularity characteristic of the Sublime Porte. And they fulfilled their mission with scrupulous exactness: robbing rich Armenians, looting houses, burning corn and hay, raiding villages, lifting cattle, raping young girls of tender age, dishonoring married women, driving away entire populations, and killing all who were manly or mad enough to attempt to resist. Armenians are now among the poorest and most wretched people on the globe.

Perhaps the Turkish authorities did not foresee, nor Turkish justice approve, these results? The authorities not only expected them, but aided and abetted, incited and rewarded those who actually committed them; and whenever an Armenian dared to complain, not only was he not listened to by the officials whom he paid to protect him, but he was thrown into a fetid prison and tortured and outraged in strange and horrible ways for his presumption and insolence.

The massacre of Sassoun itself is now proved to have been the deliberate deed of the representatives of the Sublime Porte, carefully planned and unflinchingly executed in spite of the squeamishness of Koordish brigands and the fitful gleams of human nature that occasionally made themselves felt in the hearts even of Turkish soldiers.

To complain, therefore, of the insecurity of life and property in Armenia, so long as the country is irresponsibly governed by the Sublime Porte, is as reasonable as it would be for a soldier to object to the great danger to life and limb from the enemy's bullets during a sanguinary engagement. The result complained of is precisely the object aimed at, and its completeness the most conclusive proof of the efficiency of the means employed. An eminent foreign statesman, who is commonly credited with Turkophile sentiments of uncompromising thoroughness, lately remarked to me in private conversation that Turkish rule in Armenia might be aptly described as organised brigandage, legalized murder, and meritorious immorality. Protests against such a system may be right and proper, but they can hardly be considered profitable. A philanthropist visiting a prison may feel shocked when he discovers one of the convicts with his hands and feet tied with cords; but he will scarcely spend time in complaining if he learns that the prisoner has been condemned to death, and is about to be hanged by the executioner.

The first step in carrying out the Plan of Extermination was the systematic impoverishment of the people. This is natural in a country whose officials are kept waiting eight or ten months for their salaries and must then content themselves with but a fraction of what is due. "I have not received a para³ for the past twenty weeks, and I cannot buy even clothes," exclaimed the official who was told to "shadow" me day and night in Erzeroum. "Do they pay you your salary regularly?" I inquired of the head of the telegraph office at **Kutek**. "No, Effendi, not regularly," he replied; "I have not had anything now for fully eight months. Oh yes, I have, a month's salary was given to me at Bairam."⁴ "How do you manage to live, then?" "Poorly." "But you must have some money to go on with, or else you could not keep body and soul together?" "I have a little of course, but not enough. Allah is good. You have now given me some money yourself." "Yes, but that is not for you; it is for telegrams, and belongs to the State." "Well, my shadow will have grown considerably less before the State beholds the gleam of it. I keep for myself all money paid in by the public. I take it as installments of my salary. It does not amount to very much. But

³ A Turkish coin. Forty paras are equivalent to twopence.

⁴ Bairam is the festival which follows the long fast of Ramazan.

whatever it happens to be, I pocket it.” These men are, of course, petty officials, but their case is not essentially different from that of the majority of their betters, and judges, officers, deputy-governors, and valis, are to the full as impecunious and incomparably more greedy.

Tahsin Pasha, the late Governor-General of **Bitlis**, is a fair specimen of the high Turkish dignitary of the epoch of extermination. An avaricious skinflint, he was as cruel as Ugolino's enemy, Ruggieri, and as cold as Captain Maleger in Spenser's “Faery Queen.” He cultivated a habit of imprisoning scores of wealthy Armenians, without any imputed charge or show of pretext. Liberty was then offered them in return for exorbitant sums representing the greater part of their substance. Refusal to pay was followed by treatment compared with which the torture of the Jews in mediaeval England, or the agonies of the eunuchs of the princesses of Oude in modern India were mild and salutary chastisements. Some men were kept standing up all day and night, forbidden to eat, drink, or move. If they lost strength and consciousness cold water or hot irons soon brought them round, and the work of coercion continued. Time and perseverance being on the side of the Turks, the Armenians generally ended by sacrificing everything that made life valuable, for the sake of exemption from maddening pain. It was a case of sacrificing or being sacrificed, and that which seemed the lesser of the two evils was invariably chosen.

In the Vilayet of **Bitlis** several hundred Armenians who possessed money, cattle or crops, were arbitrarily imprisoned and set free on the payment of large bribes. Some of them, unable to produce the money at once, were kept in the noisome dungeons until they raised the sum demanded, or were released by death. About one hundred Armenian prisoners died in the prison of Bitlis alone. The following petition signed and sent to me and if I mistake not, also to the foreign delegates at Moush from a well-known man whose name and address I publish, will help to convey some idea of how the Vali of Bitlis governed his province, and prospered the while:

We, who have served the Turkish Government with absolute loyalty, are maltreated and oppressed, more particularly of late years, now by the Government itself, now by Koordish brigands. Thus last year (1894) I was suddenly arrested at my own house by Turkish police and gendarmes, who escorted me to the prison of Bitlis, where I was insulted and subjected to the most horrible tortures. Having been kept four months there I was released on condition of paying £450, by way of ransom. No reason, no pretext has been given for this treatment. On my return home, I found my house in disorder, my affairs ruined, my means gone. My first thought was to appeal to the Turkish Government for redress, but I shrank from doing so, lest I should be condemned again. Hearing that you have come to Armenia for the purpose of investigating the condition of the people, I venture to request you, in God's name, to take notice of the facts of my case.

signed, Boghos Darmanian, of the village of **Iknakbodja** of the Kaza of **Manazkerd**.”

In 1890, the village elder of **Odandjor** in **Boolanyk**, Abdal by name, was a wealthy man, as wealth goes in that part of the world. He possessed 50 buffaloes, 80 oxen, 600 sheep, besides horses. The women of his family wore golden ornaments in their hair and on their breast, and he paid £ 50 a year in taxes to the Treasury. That was in 1890. In 1894 he was a poverty-stricken peasant, familiar with misery and apprehensive of death from hunger. His village and those of the entire district had been plundered, and the inhabitants stripped, so to say, naked, the Turkish authorities smiling approval the while. During the year 1894, in the districts of **Boolanyk** and **Moush** alone, upwards of ten thousand head of cattle and sheep were driven off by the Koords.

This was the method in vogue all over the country; the details varied according to the condition of things, places, and kinglets, but the means and end never varied. The result is the utter disappearance of wealth and the rapid spread of misery, so intense, so irremediable, so utterly loathsome in its moral and physical

effects as to have inspired some of its victims with that wild courage akin to madness which always takes its rise in despair.⁵

Between the Vali or Governor-General and the Zaptieh or tax-gatherer the rungs of the administrative ladder are many, and to each and all of them some portion of the substance of industrious Armenians adheres. No doubt there are far worse things than the loss of one's property, and unemotional Englishmen would rather save their sympathy for those who have endured them. But surely even that is bad enough when the outcome is not of crime, accident, or, carelessness, but of shameless and defiant injustice, and where the loser has a family of some fifteen to twenty persons. And that the loss of property very often entailed far greater losses will be evident from some of the following facts.

In July 1892, a captain of his Majesty's Hamidieh Cavalry, Idris by name, an ornament of the Hassnanlee tribe, came with his brother to demand a contribution of fodder from the inhabitants of **Hamsisheikh**. They accosted two of the Armenian notables, Alo and Hatchadoor, and ordered them to provide the hay required. "We do not possess such a quantity in the whole village," they replied. "Produce the hay without more ado, or I'll shoot you dead," exclaimed Idris. "But it does not exist, and we cannot create it." "Then die," said the gallant captain, and shot them dead on the spot. A formal complaint was lodged against Idris, and the Kaimakam, to his credit, arrested him and kept him in prison for four weeks, when the valiant Koord having paid the usual bribe was set at liberty. About thirty similar murders were committed in the same district of **Boolanyk** during that season, with the same publicity and the same impunity.

At first the Armenians were wont to complain when their relatives or friends were killed, in the hope that in some cases the arm of the law might be raised to punish the murderers and thus produce a deterrent effect upon others who might feel disposed to do likewise. But they were very soon weaned of this habit, by methods the nature of which may be gathered from the following incident: In July, 1892, a Koord named Ahmed Ogloo Batal rode over to **Govandook** (District of **Khnouss**) and drove off four oxen belonging to an Armenian named Mookho. In 1892 the law forbidding Christians to carry arms was not yet strictly observed, and Mookho, possessing a revolver, and seeing that the Koord was about to use his, fired. Both weapons went off at once and both men fell dead on the spot. What then happened was this: nineteen Armenians of the village, none of whom had any knowledge of what had occurred, were arrested and put in jail and told that they would be released on payment of a heavy bribe. Ten paid it and were set free at once. The remainder, refusing, were kept in prison for a long time afterwards. None of the Koords were molested. "Why should Mohammedans be punished for killing Armenians?" asked a Koordish brigand of me, who was also a Hamidieh officer. "It's unheard of." Why indeed? That the relatives of the murdered people should be punished and punished severely for complaining of those who have made them widows or orphans seems neat and proper to the Mohammedan mind perhaps because it is usual.

In August 1893 the Djibranlee Koords attacked the village of **Kaghkik**, plundered it, and wounded a merchant named Oannes, who was engaged in business in his shop. Next day Oannes went to the Deputy Governor (Kaimakam) in **Khnoussaberd** and lodged a complaint, whereupon the Kaimakam put him in prison for "lying." The sufferings inflicted upon him in that hotbed of typhoid fever exceed belief, but that is another story. After eight days his neighbours brought a Koord before the Kaimakam who bore out their evidence that Oannes had been really wounded in the manner described, and that he was not lying.

⁵ I have published elsewhere a comparison between the prosperity of Armenians who lived in the epoch of misgovernment and the indigence of those who languish in the present era of extermination but this interesting subject has never been exhaustively treated.

Then, and then only, did the authorities allow the people to pay a bribe of ten pounds for the release of the wounded man.

The inhabitants of **Krtaboz** (a village in **Bassen**) told me several horrible stories of what they had to endure lately from the Koords who drove off their twenty-three oxen, twenty-eight horses, sixty cows, and twenty sheep. One example which illustrates the method of Turkish justice will suffice to give the reader an inkling of their nature:

Last May [1894] twelve mounted Hamidihs attacked our village and seized our priest, Der David. They promised to release him if he paid them six pounds. He borrowed the sum, gave it to his captors and was set free. The troops fired upon the other villagers, who ran away. Next day Guil Beg went to **Hassankaleh** to complain to the authorities. They abused him, called him a liar and ordered him to be imprisoned. After having spent forty days in the horrible hole called a prison, he was permitted to pay a bribe of seven pounds and go home.

There is no redress whatever for a Christian who has suffered in property, limb, or life at the hands of Mohammedans; not because the law officers are careless or lethargic, but because they are specially retained on the other side. And the proof of this, if any proof were needed, is that the complainants themselves are speedily punished for lodging an [accusation] against their persecutors. But whenever a Koord or a Turk is the victim of a "crime," or even an accident, the energy of the Government officials knows no bounds.

In the spring of last year, when the snows were thawing and the waters rose high in the rivers and streams, some needy Koords were moving along the bank of the river, hard by **Hussnakar**. They were wretched beggars, asking alms, and battling with fate. In an attempt to ford the river they were carried away and drowned. Forthwith the villagers were accused of having murdered them, and four Armenian notables were arrested and imprisoned in **Hassankaleh** on this trumped-up charge, the real object of which was not disguised.

After the lapse of seven or eight months the villagers were told that on payment of a bribe of £75 the prisoners would be discharged. The money had to be scraped together and paid to the authorities, whereupon the men were released. I saw two of them, Atam and Dono, myself.

The taxes levied upon Armenians are exorbitant; the bribes that invariably accompany them and are imposed by the Zaptiehs may swell to any proportions, and assume the most repugnant forms, while the methods employed to collect both constitute by themselves a sufficient justification for the sweeping away of Ottoman rule in Armenia. To give a fair instance of the different rates of taxation for Christians and Mohammedans in towns it will suffice to point out that in Erzeroum, where there are 8000 Mohammedan houses, the Moslems pay only 395,000 piastres, whereas the Christians, whose houses number but 2000, pay 430,000 piastres.

In the country districts everything without exception is highly taxed by the Government, and the heaviest burden of this legal exaction is light when compared with the extortion practiced by its agents, the Zaptiehs. A family, for instance, is supposed to contribute, say, £5, and fulfils its obligation. The Zaptiehs, however, ask for £3 or £4 more for themselves, and are met with a rash refusal. Negotiations, interlarded with violent and abusive language, ensue, and £1 is accepted. But the Zaptiehs' blood is up. In a week they return and demand the same taxes over again. The Armenians wax angry, protest and present their receipt, where at the Zaptiehs laughingly explain that the document in question is no receipt but a few verses from a Turkish book. The villagers plead poverty and implore mercy.

Greed, not compassion, moves the Zaptiehs to compromise the matter for £3 more, but the money is not forthcoming. Then they demand the surrender of the young women and girls of the family to glut their

brutal appetites, and refusal is punished with a series of tortures over which decency and humanity throw a veil of silence. Rape, and every kind of brutal outrage conceivable to the diseased mind of Oriental profligates, and incredible to the average European intelligence, varied perhaps with murder or arson, wind up the incident.

I have seen and spoken with victims of these representatives of the Sublime Porte; I have inspected their wounds, questioned their families, interrogated their priests, their persecutors, and their gaolers [jailers] (some of them being incarcerated for complaining), and I unhesitatingly affirm not merely that these horrors are real facts but that they are frequent occurrences. The following is the translation of an authentic document in my possession, signed and sealed by the inhabitants of **Melikan** (Kaza of **Keghi**), addressed as recently as March 26 of the present year to his Beatitude, the learned and saintly Metropolitan Archbishop of Erzeroum, a dignitary who enjoys the respect and esteem of friends and foes:

For a long time past the four or five Zaptiehs charged with the collection of the imperial taxes have chosen our village for their headquarters and compel the inhabitants of the outlying country to come hither to pay their contributions. They eat, drink, and feed their horses at our expense, undisguisedly showing that they are resolved to reduce us to beggary.

Lately seven other Zaptiehs, who had not even the pretext of collecting taxes, entered our village, beat the inhabitants, insulted the Christian religion and dishonoured our wives and daughters, after which they seized three men who protested, Boghos, Mardig, and Krikor, bound them with a twofold chain and hung them up by the feet from the rafters. They left them in this position until the blood began to flow from their nostrils. These poor men fell ill in consequence. The Zaptiehs, however, declared publicly that they had treated the people thus merely in obedience to the special orders of the chief of police.

We therefore appeal to imperial justice to rescue us from this unbearable position.

--The Inhabitants of the Village of **Melikan**, Kaza of **Keghi**. (Signed) KATSHERE. "26th March, 1895.

Here is another petition from another village of the same Kaza, likewise addressed to the Metropolitan Archbishop of Erzeroum:

A number of Zaptiehs, on pretext of gathering taxes, rode into our village at Five o'clock Turkish (about ten o'clock A.M.) broke open the doors of our dwellings, entered the inner apartments, clutched our wives and children, who were in a state of semi-nudity, and cast them into the road along with the couches on which they lay. Then they beat and maltreated them most cruelly. Finally they selected over thirty of our women, shut them up in a barn, and wrought their criminal will upon them. Before leaving they took all the food and fodder we possessed, as is their invariable custom. We beg to draw your attention to these facts and to implore the imperial clemency. -- The inhabitants of the village of **Arek**, Kaza of **Keghi**.

--(Signed) MOORADIAN, RESSIAN, BERGHYAN, MELKONIAN, 26th March, 1895.

I was presented myself in the house of an Armenian peasant of the village of **Kipri Kieu**, when a number of mounted Zaptiehs arrived, woke up the inmates, and insolently demanded food for themselves, barley for their horses, and couches for the night. What more they would have called for I am not prepared to say, but I extricated my host from the difficulty by refusing them admittance on the ground that I had hired the house for the night. No wonder that the peasants of the District of **Khnouss** complain in the petition which they asked me to lay before "the noble and humane people of England," "That the once prosperous and fertile country is now deserted, waste and desolate."

These, then, are the horrors which are connoted by the phrase so flippantly uttered by certain enlightened English people: "These Armenians and Koords are eternally quarrelling and a little bloodshed more or less would not seem seriously to affect the general average." It is true enough in the sense in which it is correct to say that sheep and wolves are perpetually at war with each other, and in this sense only. The

Armenians are naturally peaceful in all places: passionately devoted to agriculture in the country, and wholly absorbed by mercantile pursuits in the towns. Lest their inborn aversion to bloodshed, however, should be overcome by the impulse of duty, the instinct of self-defense, or deep-rooted affection for those near and dear to them, they are forbidden to possess arms, and the tortures that are inflicted on the few who disregard this law, would bring a blush to the cheek of a countryman of Confucius.⁶ They must rely for protection exclusively upon the Turkish soldiers and the Turkish law.

The nature of the protection afforded by the Imperial troops was sufficiently clearly revealed last August and September on the slopes of **Frfrkar** and the heights of **Andok**, in the hamlets of **Dalvorik** and in the valley of **Ghellyegoozan**. The villages of **Odandjor**, **Hamzasheikh**, **Kakarloob Kharagyul**, flourishing and prosperous in 1890-1891, did not contain one sheep, one buffalo, one horse in 1894.. The stables were all tenantless, the stalls all empty, and the ashes of seventy enormous stacks of corn told the rest of the tale. This was the congenial work of the Koords, whose friends, the Turkish troops, were quartered to the number of 200 horse soldiers in **Yondjalee**, half an hour distant from **Odandjor**, 200 in **Kop**, and 100 in **Shekagoob**. The protection which they afforded was given to the Koords, and the reward they received was a share in the spoils.

The protection given by Turkish law is of a like nature, only incomparably more disastrous to those Armenians who venture to have recourse to it. Two or three instances, vouched for by a host of witnesses, verified by foreign consuls and authenticated by official documents, will throw light enough for all practical purposes upon the strange forms assumed by Turkish justice in the provinces of Armenia.

Kevoork Vartanian, of the village of **Mankassar** (Sandjak of Alashkerd) testified, among other things, as follows:

In 1892, a Koord, Andon by name, son of Kerevash (of the tribe of Tshalal), came with his comrades to my house and took five pounds in gold belonging to me, which I had saved up to buy seed corn with. I lodged a complaint against him, but the authorities dismissed me with contempt. Andon, hearing of my attempt to have him punished, came one night with twelve men, stood on our roof and looking down through the aperture fired, my daughter-in-law, Yezeko, struck by a bullet, fell dead. Her two boys and my child Missak (two years old) likewise lost their lives then and there. Then the Koords entered the apartments and took my furniture, clothing, four oxen and four cows.⁷ I hastened to the village of **Karaklisse** and complained to Rahim Pasha. Having heard my story, he said: "The Hamidieh Koords are the Sultan's warriors. To do thus is their right. You Armenians are liars."- And we were imprisoned. We did not obtain our release until we had paid two pounds in gold.

The following winter two hundred soldiers entered our village under the leadership of Rahim Pasha himself. He at once told us that it was illegal to complain of the doings of the Koords. Then he quartered himself and his troops upon us and demanded daily eight sheep, ten measures of barley, besides eggs, poultry, and butter. Forty days running our village supplied these articles of food gratis, receiving curses and blows for our pains. Rahim Pasha, angry with his host, Pare, for grumbling, had a copper vessel hung over the fire and, when heated, ordered it to be placed on Pare's head. Then he had him stripped naked and little bits of flesh nipped out of his quivering arms with pincers.

These ruffians had scarcely quit our village when Aipé Pasha with sixty horsemen took their places. Seeing that there were no more sheep to be had in the village, they slaughtered and ate our cows and oxen, and having inflicted much suffering upon us during six days, they too left. To whom could we

⁶ Khozro, a well-to-do inhabitant of **Prkhooss** near Lake Nazig (District of **Akhlat**) was a lucky exception. True, he did not exactly possess a gun, but he was suspected of having one. His house was searched, the floor dug up, the roof examined, in vain. Then he was imprisoned for a month and allowed to purchase his liberty by paying £70, in gold and signing a paper to the effect that he never had firearms of any kind.

⁷ Cows, horses, etc, are frequently lodged in the apartment in which the inmates live and sleep. I have passed many a restless night in a spacious room along with horses, buffaloes, oxen, sheep and goats.

address our complaints, seeing that the legally constituted authorities themselves perpetrated these things? Nothing was left for us but to quit the country, which we did.”

Take another case in which the victim was the wife of a Protestant Armenian missionary, Madame Sookyassian, of the village of **Todoveran** (District of Bassen). I am personally acquainted with that family, and possess the portraits of all the members of it, including the lady who was afterwards murdered.

On September 12, 1894, deposed Armenag Sookyassian, the son of the missionary's wife, we were seated at table in my father's house, when a boy came and told us that the Turks and Koords had come to attack us Christians.⁸ My brother crossed over to the other side of the street, where our shop was, to fetch a revolver. Sixteen Koordish horsemen meanwhile entered the street, ascended the roofs and opened fire. We barricaded the door, but they broke it in. A bullet struck my mother on the shoulder, but without inflicting a serious wound. Being on the roof, she defended herself by throwing stones. Meanwhile one of the Mohammedans leveled his gun and, taking aim, fired. The bullet struck her on the cheek and passed out under the ear, carrying away the whole side of her face. She dropped, was carried in, and asked for water, which could only be given by raising her upper jaw. Next morning she was dead. We complained, but no one was punished.

One more typical instance and I shall have done with this branch of the subject. The case which I am now about to narrate is taken not merely from the depositions of the parties interested, but from the official records, signed and sealed by Government employés, which I myself have seen. It throws a more powerful light upon Turkish justice, and teaches a more useful lesson to those who still honestly believe in Turkish promises than the most eloquent diatribe.

In the month of June, 1890, the village of **Alidjikrek** was the scene of a double crime. The Armenian shepherds who were tending the flocks of the villagers rushed in excitedly asking for help: “The Koords of **Ibil Ogloo Ibrahim** came up with their sheep and drove us out of the village pastures.” It was one of the commonplaces of village life in Turkish Armenia. Four young men set out to reason with the Moslems and assert the rights of property; but scarcely had they reached the ground, when the Koords opened fire and killed one of the youths, named Hossep, on the spot. Another fell mortally wounded; his name, Haroothioon. Their comrades fled in horror to the village; the people, dismayed, abandoned their work; the parish priest and several of the principal inhabitants ran to the scene of the murder, others rode off to inform the gendarmes.

The Zaptiehs (gendarmes) accompanied by an official were soon on the spot. They found Hossep dead, and the parish priest, Der Ohannes, administering the last consolations of religion to the dying Haroothioon. They ordered the prayers to cease and menacingly asked. “Where are the Koordish murderers?” “They have fled,” was the reply. “Indeed; probably you dogs have killed them, and buried them out of sight. You are all my prisoners.” (Turning to the priest.) “You too, come!” And they were all taken to **Hassankaleh** and thrown into the loathsome dungeon there. After a time they were transferred to the prison of Erzeroum.

The parish priest, Der Ohannes, was a well-to-do man. The process of systematic impoverishment was then only beginning. His brother Garabed, and their ten comrades in misfortune, were likewise men of substance, and it seemed desirable to the officials that their property should change hands. They were left therefore to soak in the fetid vapours of a reeking Eastern prison-house. The time dragged slowly on, day by day, week by week, and month by month, till they seemed to have been completely forgotten. Their families were in an endless agony of fear, their affairs were utterly neglected, their health was wholly undermined. In this pandemonium they passed a year - the most horrible period of their lives.

⁸ This narrative has been abridged by me.

Then they humbly besought their persecutors to help them to their liberty and to name the price. The terms were agreed to and they were advised to send Koords to hunt for traces of the Koordish murderers whom they were accused of having murdered in turn. "If they be found alive you will be set free." The cost of this advice and of the ways and means of carrying it out amounted to about £ 400, which the prisoners were compelled to borrow at 40 percent. interest.

The search was of course successful, Koordish and Turkish assassins, when their victims are Christians, having no need to hide their persons, no motive to hang their heads. What they do is well done. These particular heroes were found enrolled in a battalion of his Majesty's favourite cavalry the Hamidieh of **Alashkerd**. They confessed and did not deny; a cloud of witnesses, Turks and Koords of course, Christians being disqualified, testified in court in favour of the twelve Armenian prisoners, who were then set at liberty, with ruined fortunes and broken health. The sentence of the court set forth that the Armenians, charged with the crime of having killed certain Koords who had assassinated two Armenian villagers, had proved their innocence, the Koords in question having been discovered living and well, serving the Commander of the Faithful in the Hamidieh Corps.

The Koordish murderers, about whose precious lives so much fuss was made were left in peace, and they still continue to serve his Majesty the Sultan with the same zeal and contempt of consequences as before. A dog will bark if another dog be shot in its presence. These Armenians did not even grumble; they simply called in the representatives of Imperial law and justice, who proceeded to deal with them as with murderers. But Christians in Armenia dare not aspire to be treated with the consideration shown to obedient dogs by good-natured masters.

The stories told of these Koordish Hamidieh officers in general, and of one of them, named Mostigo, in particular, seemed so wildly improbable that I was at great pains to verify them. Learning that this particular Fra Diavolo⁹ had been arrested and was carefully guarded as a dangerous criminal in the prison of Erzeroum, where he would probably be hanged, I determined to obtain, if possible, an interview with him and learn the truth from his own lips. My first attempt ended in failure; Mostigo being a desperate murderer, who had once before escaped from jail, was subjected to special restrictions, and if I had carried out my original plan of visiting him in disguise, the probability is I should not have returned alive. After about three weeks' tedious and roundabout negotiations, I succeeded in gaining the gaoler's ear, having first replenished his purse. I next won over the brigand himself, and the upshot of my endeavours was an arrangement that Mostigo was to be allowed to leave the prison secretly, and at night, to spend six hours in my room, and then to be re-conducted to his dungeon.

When the appointed day arrived the gaoler repudiated his part of the contract on the ground that Mostigo, aware that his life was forfeited, would probably give the prison a wide berth if allowed to leave its precincts. After some further negotiations, however, I agreed to give two hostages for his return, one of them a brother Koord, whose life the brigand's notions of honour would not allow him to sacrifice for the chance of saving his own. At last he came to me one evening, walking over the roofs, lest the police permanently stationed at my door should espy him. I kept him all night, showed him to two of the most respectable Europeans in Erzeroum, and, lest any doubt should be thrown on the story, had myself photographed with him the next morning.

⁹ Fra Diavolo (1830) A highly popular comic opera by D.F.E. Auber. It is founded on the exploits of Michele Pezza (1771-1806), a celebrated brigand and renegade monk, who evaded pursuit for many years amidst the mountains of Calabria. [ed]

The tale unfolded by that Koordish noble constitutes a most admirable commentary upon the Turkish *régime* in Armenia. This is not the place to give it in full. One or two short extracts must suffice.

- Q. “Now, Mostigo, I desire to hear from your own lips and to write down some of your wonderful deeds. I want to make them known to the ‘hat-wearers.’ ”¹⁰
- A. “Even so. Announce them to the Twelve Powers.”¹¹

There were evidently no misgivings about moral consequences; no fears of judicial punishment. And yet retribution was at hand; Mostigo was said to be doomed to death. Desirous of clearing up this point, I went on :

“I am sorry to find that you are living in prison. Have you been there long?”

- A. “I, too, am sorry. Five months, but it seems an age.”
- Q. “These Armenians are to blame, I suppose?”
- A. “Yes.”
- Q. “You wiped out too many of them, carried off their women, burned their villages, and made it generally hot for them, I am told?”
- A. (scornfully). “That has nothing to do with my imprisonment. I shall not be punished for plundering Armenians. We all do that. I seldom killed except when they resisted. But the Armenians betrayed me and I was caught. That's what I mean. But if I be hanged it will be for attacking and raping the wife of a Turkish Colonel who is now here in Erzeroum. But not for Armenians! Who are they that I should suffer for them?”

After he had narrated several adventures of his, in the course of which he dishonoured Christian women, killed Armenian villagers, robbed the post and escaped from prison, he went on to say:

We did great deeds after that: deeds that would astonish the Twelve Powers to hear told. We attacked villages, killed people who would have killed us, gutted houses, taking money, carpets, sheep and women, and robbed travellers ... Daring and great were our deeds, and the mouths of men were full of them.

Having heard the story of many of these “great deeds,” in some of which fifty persons met their death, I asked:

- Q. “Do the Armenians ever offer you resistance when you take their cattle and their women?”
- A. “Not often. They cannot. They have no arms, and they know that even if they could kill a few of us it would do them no good, for other Koords would come and take vengeance; but when we kill them no one's eyes grow large with rage. The Turks hate them, and we do not. We only want money and spoil, and some Koords also want their lands, but the Turks want their lives. A few months ago I attacked the Armenian village of **Kara Kipriu** and drove off all the sheep in the place. I did not leave one behind. The villagers, in despair, did follow us that time and fire some shots at us, but it was nothing to speak of. We drove the sheep towards Erzeroum to sell them there. But on the way we had a fight near the Armenian village of **Sheme**. The peasants knew we had lifted the sheep from their own people, and they attacked us. We were only five Koords and they were many - the whole village was up against us. Two of my men, rayahs only, were

¹⁰ The Koords call all Europeans hat-wearers, and generally regard them with respect and awe.

¹¹ I.e. To the whole universe

killed.¹² We killed fifteen Armenians. They succeeded in capturing forty of the sheep. The remainder we held and sold in Erzeroum.”

Q. “Did you kill many Armenians generally?”

A. “Yes. We did not wish to do so. We only want booty, not lives, Lives are of no use to us. But we had to drive bullets through people at times, to keep them quiet; that is, if they resisted.”

Q. “Did you often use your daggers?”

A. “No; generally our rifles. We must live. In autumn we manage to get as much corn as we need for the winter, and money besides. We have cattle, but we take no care of it. We give it to the Armenians to look after and feed.”

Q. “But if they refuse?”

A. “Well, we burn their hay, their corn, their houses, and we drive off their sheep so they do not refuse. We take back our cattle in spring, the Armenians must return the same number that they received.”

Q. “But if cattle disease should carry them off?”

A. “That is the *Armenians'* affair. They must return to us what we gave them, or an equal number. And they know it. We cannot bear the loss. Why should they not? Nearly all our sheep come from them.”

After having listened to scores of stories of his expeditions, murders, rapes, etc., I again asked: “Can you tell me some more of your daring deeds, Mostigo, for the ears of the Twelve Powers?” to which I received this characteristic reply:

A. Once the wolf was asked: Tell us something about the sheep you devoured? and he said: I ate thousands of sheep, which of them are you talking about? Even so it is with my deeds. If I spoke and you wrote for two days, much would still remain untold.

This brigand is a Koord, and the name of the Koords is legion. *Ex uno disce omne.*¹³ And yet the Koords have shown themselves to be the most humane of all the persecutors of the Armenians. Needing money, this man robbed; desirous of pleasure, he dishonoured women and girls; defending his booty, he killed men and women, and during it all he felt absolutely certain of impunity, so long as his victims were Armenians. Is there no law then one is tempted to ask? There is, and a very good law for that corner of the globe were it only administered; for the moment he robbed the Imperial post and dishonoured a Turkish woman, he was found worthy of death.

Laws, reforms and constitutions therefore, were they drawn up by the wisest and most experienced legislators and statesmen of the world, will not be worth the paper they are written on so long as the Turks are allowed to administer them without control. The proof is contained in the life and acts of Turkish officials any time during the past fifty years.

Here, for example, is an honourable record of an energetic administrator, his Excellency Hussein Pasha, Brigadier General of his Majesty the Sultan, which will bear the closest scrutiny. Commanding a gang of Koordish brigands, which could be increased to about 2000 men, he continually harassed the peaceful inhabitants of the province, plundering, torturing, violating, killing, till his name alone sent a thrill of terror to the hearts of all. The Armenians of **Patnotz** suffered so much from his depredations that they all quitted their village *en masse* and migrated to **Karakilisse**, where the Kaimakam resides; whereupon Hussein

¹² The Koords are divided into *Torens* or nobles, who lead in war time and possess and enjoy in peace; and *Rayahs*, who sacrifice their lives for their lords in all raids and feuds, and are wholly dependent on them at all times. A *rayah's* life may be taken by a toren with almost the same impunity as a Christian's.

¹³ From Latin: “from one learn all.”

surrounded the house of the Bishop of Karakilisse with a large force and compelled him to send the people back.

Even the Mohammedans felt so shocked at his doings, that the Mussulman priest of **Patnotz**, Sheikh Nari, complained of him to the Vali (Governor-General) of Erzeroum. Hussein then sent his men, who murdered Sheikh Nari and frightened his daughter-in-law to death. In one expedition he carried off 2600 sheep, many horses, kine, etc., took £500, burnt nine villages, killed ten men, and cut off the right hands, noses and ears of eleven others. Early in the year 1890 he raped five Christian girls of **Patnotz**, and in September and October of the same year he levied a contribution of £300 on the people of the same district. For none of these crimes was he ever tried.

In December, 1890, he sent his brother to raise more money, which was done by raiding twenty-one villages of the **Aintab** District, the net result being £350 and 200 batmans of butter (3,000 lbs.). Hatsbo, an Armenian of **Patnotz**, who could not, or would not, contribute a certain sum to his coffer, had his house raided in his absence, and his wife and two children killed. All this time the gallant Hussein occupied the post and “discharged the duties” of a **Mudir** or Deputy Sub-Governor. One day he drove off 1000 sheep and 7 yoke of buffaloes from **Patnotz** and **Kizilkoh** and sold them in **Erzeroum** to a merchant, after which he confiscated a fine horse belonging to Manook, an Armenian of **Kizilkoh**, and sent it as a present to the son of an Erzeroum judge.

One night towards the end of February, 1891, Hussein, his nephew Rassoul, and others, entered the house of an Armenian, Kaspar, for the purpose of carrying off Kaspar's handsome daughter-in-law. The inmates, however, shouted for help, whereupon Hussein, raising his revolver, shot the young woman dead. A petition was presented asking that he be punished, but the Vali of Erzeroum declined to receive it, and Hussein was summoned to Constantinople, welcomed with cordiality, decorated by his Majesty, raised to the rank of Pasha, and appointed Brigadier-General.

When the troops went to Moush and Sassoun last year, Hussein was one of the heroes, and when “order” was restored there, he returned to **Patnotz** with several young Sassounian girls whom he abducted, and he now lives happy and respected. No doubt there are missions which might be entrusted to a gentleman like Brigadier-General Hussein Pasha and men of his type. But is the government of a Christian people one of them? And if we assume that the then Vali of **Erzeroum** and the other administrators of the country were men of a much higher moral standard than he, of what avail were their noble character and admirable intentions, seeing that they allowed him to plunder, ravish, burn and kill unchecked? And is it reasonable to blame Hussein Pasha for deeds, after the perpetration of which, he was honoured and promoted by the guardian of all law and order, the Commander of the Faithful?

Not all of the officials have the same tastes or the same degree of courage as his Excellency Hussein Pasha. There are others, many others no doubt, who, whatever their private proclivities may be, feel moved by their official sense of the fitness of things to cast about for a pretext for acts for which there could be no conceivable justification. And the follies which they commit in pursuit of this shadow would seem incredible were they not notorious. The following case has been inquired into and verified by the foreign representatives in Turkey.

In the spring of 1893 Hassib Pasha, the Governor of **Moush**, feeling the need of some proofs of the disaffection of the Armenians of **Avzoot** and the neighbouring villages, despatched Police Captain Reshid Effendi thither to search for arms. Reshid set out, made careful inquiries and diligently searched in the

houses, on the roofs, under the ground, but in vain. There were no firearms anywhere. He returned and reported that the villagers had strictly observed the law forbidding them to possess weapons of any kind. But Hassib Pasha waxed wroth [became angry].

“How dare you assert what I know to be untrue?” he asked. “Go back this minute and find the arms. Don't dare return without them!” The Police Captain again rode off to Avzoot and searched every nook and corner with lamps, so to say, turning the houses inside out. But he found nothing. Then he summoned the village Elder and said: “I have been sent to discover the hidden arms here. Tell me where they are.”

“But there are none.” There must be some.” “I assure you you are mistaken.” “Well, now listen. I have to find arms here, whether there are any or none, and I cannot return without them. Unless you deliver me some, I shall quarter myself and my men upon your village.” This meant certain plunder and probably rape. The Elder was dismayed. “What are we to do?” he asked. “We have no arms.” “Go and get some then, steal them, buy them, but get them.” Two or three persons were accordingly sent to the nearest Koordish village, where they purchased three cartloads of old daggers, flintlock guns and rusty swords, which were duly handed over to Reshid. With these he returned to the Governor of Moush exulting. Hassib Pasha, seeing the collection, rejoiced exceedingly and said: “You see now, I was right. I told you there were arms hidden away there. You did not seek for them properly at first. Be more diligent in future.”

Verto Popakhian, an inhabitant of the village of **Khalil Tshaush (Khnouss)**, narrated the following, the story of his troubles, which throws a curious sidelight on Turkish justice and Armenian peasant life generally:

A Koord, named Djundee, endeavored to carry off my niece, Nazo, but we took her to Erzeroum, and gave her in marriage to an Armenian. We often have to give our young girls in marriage when they are mere children, eleven to twelve years old, or else dress them up in boys' clothes, to preserve them undefiled. Nazo's husband was the son of the parish priest of Hertev. The Koords vowed vengeance upon me for saving the girl thus. Djundee beat my brother so seriously that he was ill in bed for nearly six months and he and his men drove off my cattle, burned our grain, threshing-floor, and hay, and ruined us completely. When the girl came home on a visit, Djundee and his Koords attacked the house, and carried her off. We complained to all the authorities in the place and in Erzeroum too. By the time they agreed to examine the girl publicly, she had borne a child to the Koord, and shame prevented her return. She remained a Mohammedan. We then bought a gun for our protection, the law forbidding firearms not existing yet. In 1893 we sold the gun to a Koord named Hadji Daho, but in 1894 the police came and demanded it. We said we had sold it, and the Koord bore out our assertion. He even showed it to them. But they arrested my brother and myself, and compelled us to give our two buffaloes in exchange for two guns, which they took away as incriminating proof of our guilt; and then they sent us to Erzeroum prison. We were kept here, suffering great hardship, for a long time. When eight months had passed my brother died of ill-treatment. Then they promised me my liberty in consideration of large bribes, which reduced me to absolute beggary. I had no choice. I gave them all they asked, leaving myself and family of nineteen persons completely destitute. And then they condemned me to five years' imprisonment.

Justice in all its aspects is rigorously denied to the Armenian. The mere fact that he dares to invoke it as plaintiff or prosecutor against a Koord or a Turk is always sufficient to metamorphose him into a defendant or a criminal, generally into both, whereupon he is invariably thrown into prison. In such cases the prison is intended to be no more than the halfway-house between relative comfort and absolute misery, the inmates being destined to be stripped of all they possess and then turned adrift. But what the prison really is cannot be made sufficiently clear in words. If the old English Star Chamber, the Spanish Inquisition, a Chinese opium den, the ward of a yellow fever hospital, and a nook in the lowest depths of Dante's Hell be conceived as blended and merged into one, the resulting picture will somewhat resemble a bad Turkish prison. Filth, stench, disease, deformity, pain in forms and degrees inconceivable in Europe, constitute the physical characteristics: the psychological include the blank despair that is final, fiendish,

fierce malignity, hellish delight in human suffering, stoic self-sacrifice in the cultivation of loathsome vices, stark madness raging in the moral nature only, the whole incarnated in grotesque beings whose resemblance to man is a living blasphemy against the Deity. In these noisome dungeons, cries of exquisite suffering and shouts of unnatural delight continually commingle; ribald songs are sung to the accompaniment of heartrending groans; meanwhile the breath is passing away from bodies which had long before been soulless, and are unwept save by the clammy walls whereon the vapour of unimagined agonies and foul disease condenses into big drops and runs down in driblets to the reeking ground. Truly it is a horrid nightmare quickened into life.

Last March I dispatched a friend of mine to visit the political prisoners in the Bitlis penitentiary, and to ask them to give me a succinct account of their condition. Four of them replied in a joint letter, which is certainly the most gruesome piece of reading I have beheld ever since I first perused a description of the Black Hole. Only the least sensational passages can be stripped of the decent disguise of a foreign language and exposed to the light of day. It is dated "Bitlis Prison, Hell, March 28 (April 9th), 1895," and begins thus:

In Bitlis Prison there are seven cells, each one capable of containing from ten to twelve persons. The number they actually contain is from twenty to thirty. *There are no sanitary arrangements whatever.* Offal, vermin, and the filth that should find a special place elsewhere are heaped together in the same cell. . . . The water is undrinkable. Frequently the Armenian prisoners are forced to drink 'Khwlitsh' water - i.e., water from the tank in which the Mohammedans perform their ablutions. . . .

Then follows a brief but suggestive account of the treatment endured by the writers' comrades, many of whom died from the effects. For example: "Malkhass Aghadjanian and Serop Malkhassian of **Avzoot** (Moush) were beaten till they lost consciousness. The former was branded in eight places, the latter in twelve places, with a hot iron." The further outrage which was committed upon Serop must be nameless." "Hagop Seropian, of the village of Avzoot, was stripped and beaten till he lost consciousness; then a girdle was thrown round his neck, and having been dragged into the Zaptieh's room, he was branded in sixteen parts of his body with red-hot ramrods." Having described other sufferings to which he was subjected, such as the plucking out of his hair, standing motionless in one place without food or drink till nature could hold out no longer, the writer goes on to mention outrages for which the English tongue has no name, and civilized people no ears. Then he continues,

Sirko Minassian, Garabed Malkhassian, and Isro Ardvadzadoorian of the same village, having been violently beaten, were forced to remain in a standing position for a long time, and then had the contents of certain vessels poured upon their heads. Korke Mardoyan, of the village of Semol, was violently beaten; his hair was plucked out by the roots, and he was forced to stand motionless for twenty-four hours. Then Moolazim Hadji Ali and the gaoler, Abdoolkadir, forced him to perform the so-called *Sheitantopy*,¹⁴ which resulted in his death. He was forty-five years of age. Mekhitar Saforian and Khatsbo Baloyan of **Kakarloo** (**Boolanyk**) were subjected to the same treatment. Mekhitar was but fifteen and Khatsbo only thirteen years old. Sogho Sharoyan, of Alvarindj (Moush), was conveyed from Moush to Bitlis prison handcuffed. Here he was cruelly beaten, and forced to maintain a standing position without food. Whenever he fainted they revived him with douches of cold water and stripes. They also plucked out his hair, and burned his body with red-hot irons. Then.. (they subjected him to treatment which cannot be described.) Hambartzoon Boyadjian, after his arrest, was exposed to the scorching heat of the sun for three days. Then he was taken to **Semal**, where he and his companions were beaten and shut up in a church. They were not only not allowed to leave the church to relieve the wants of nature, but were forced to defile the baptismal fonts and the church altar...Where are you, Christian Europe and America?

¹⁴ Literally "Devil's ring." The hands are tightly bound together, and the feet, tied together by the great toes, are forced up over the hands. The remainder of the *Sheitantopy* consists of a severe torture and a beastly crime.

The four signatures at the foot of this letter include that of a highly respected and God-fearing ecclesiastic. I am personally acquainted with scores of people who have passed through these prison mills. The stories they narrate of their experience there are gruesome, and would be hard to believe were they not amply confirmed by the still more eerie tales told by their broken spirits, their wasted bodies, and the deep scars and monstrous deformities that will abide with them till the grave or the vultures devour them. There is something so forbiddingly fantastic, and wildly grotesque in the tortures and outrages invented by their gaolers or their local governors that a simple unvarnished account of them sounds like the ravings of a diseased devil. But this is a subject upon which it is impossible to be explicit.

The manner in which men qualify for the Turkish prison in Armenia can be easily deduced from what has already been said. The possession of money, cattle, corn, land, a wife or daughter, or enemies, is enough. We are shocked to read of the cruelty of brutal Koords who ride to a village, attack the houses, drive off the sheep, seize all the portable property, dishonour the women, and return leisurely home, conscious of having done a good day's work. We call it a disgrace to civilisation, and perhaps the qualification is correct. But bad as it sounds, it is a mercy compared with the Turkish methods, which rely upon the machinery of the law and the horrors of the prison. A man whom poverty, nay, hunger, prevents from paying imaginary arrears of taxes, who declines to give up his cow or his buffalo as baksheesh to the Zaptiehs, who beseeches them to spare the honour of his wife or his daughter, is thrown into one of these dungeons, which he never leaves until he has been branded with the indelible stigma of the place. But let us take one of the usual and by no means most revolting cases of arrest and imprisonment as an illustration.

A young man from the village of **Avzood** (Moush District) went to Russia in search of work, and found it. He also married, and lived there for several years. Towards the close of 1892 he came back to his native village, and the police, informed that "an Armenian who has lived in Russia is returned," dispatched four of their number under the command of Isaag Tshaush to Avzood. They arrived two hours after sundown, and while three of them guarded the house where the young man was staying, the leader entered. Shots were heard immediately after, and the young Armenian and Isaag lay dead.

The authorities in Bitlis then sent a Colonel of the Zaptiehs to Avzood to see "justice" done. And it was done very speedily. The Colonel summoned the men of the village, none of whom were mixed up in the matter, and put them in prison. Then the officials deflowered all the girls, and dishonoured all the young women in Avzood, after which they liberated the men, except about twenty, whom they conveyed to the gaol of Bitlis. A few of these died there, and ten others were soon afterwards dismissed. Finally they decided to charge a young teacher, Markar, of the village of **Vartenis** with the murder of Isaag Tshaush, and as there was no evidence against him, the other prisoners were ordered to testify. Armenians have the reputation of being liars, but they certainly draw the line at swearing away an innocent man's life; and they refused in this case to commit the double crime of perjury and murder. Strenuous efforts were made to determine them; they were stripped naked, burned in various parts of the body with red-hot irons, till they yelled with pain. Then they were prevented from sleeping for several nights, and tortured acutely again, till, writhing and quivering, they promised to swear anything, everything if once relieved from their agony. A document declaring that Markar was in the village when Isaag Tshaush arrived there, and that he had shot Isaag in their presence, was drawn up in their names. To this they duly affixed their seals. Meanwhile Markar himself was being tortured in another part of the prison.

When the trial came and the incriminating document was read, the signatories stripped themselves in court, exhibited the ugly marks left by the red-hot irons, and called God to witness that that evidence of theirs, wrung from them by maddening torture, was a lie. Markar, on the other hand, declared that he was not in

Avzood village at all on the night in question. But these statements were unavailing; he was hanged last year, and the “witnesses” condemned to various terms in fortified towns. Some of the women dishonoured by the Zaptiehs died from the effects of the treatment to which they were subjected.

All accounts of the prisons in Armenia, Turkish, Koordish, and Christian, agree in essential characteristics. I lately called on a very respectable Armenian, a man of good education and once a person of property, who has passed through several prisons, the object of his incarceration being the desire to deprive him of all he possessed. I questioned him about the treatment of the prisoners and what he said was this:

“Armenian prisoners are very often tortured; but a good deal depends upon the place. Some prisons are very bad, being noted for the abominable things that go on inside their walls; others are not so horrible. The prison of Erzeroum, for example, is not nearly so bad as that of Bitlis, though there, too, torture is occasionally employed in a fiendish way. The reason is, I conjecture, that the foreign consuls in Erzeroum can nearly always get information about what goes on in the prison there, and the authorities are restrained by the knowledge of this.”

Q. “Then there is no torture in Erzeroum?”

A. “There is sometimes, but not nearly so often as elsewhere. I have seen the ‘Standing Box’ there, and I know it was used some time ago, but I fancy it would not be often employed, certainly not nearly so often as in Bitlis.”

Q. “What is the Standing Box?”

A. “It is a small, cupboard hole, just large enough for one man to stand in, something like a sentry box in shape. The prisoner put there could not sit, lean, or move.”

Q. “Surely he could lean, at least, against the wall?”

A.. “No; because it bristles all over with sharp iron points, and on the ground there is barely room enough for his two feet to stand. He is kept here for 24, 36, 48 hours, as the case may be; sometimes longer still. Two or more Zaptiehs always stand guard, and see that the thing is properly carried out. He receives nothing to eat or to drink, and is not allowed to leave even to attend to the wants of nature. This is a horrible torture. It was applied to Markar, the teacher, and to numbers of my friends and acquaintances. Damadian's servant, Sogho Sharoyan, was subjected to it; so were Hagop Seropian of **Avzood**, Sirko Minassian, Garabed Molkhassian, Korki Mardoyan, Saghatiel Mirzoyan of Khosgheldi (Boolanyk), and scores of others. But this is by no means the worst. The torture of Sheitantopy, which is also an outrage that ”

“Yes, I know all about that.”

The Armenians taken from **Moush** to the prison of **Hassankaleh**, many of whom were guilty only of giving evidence before the Commission about what they had seen during the massacre, are used for the perpetration of nameless crimes. The officials who thus abuse them are numerous and well known. I am in possession of their full names and addresses, and I could bring scores of witnesses to prove the charge. These scoundrels are generally Zaptiehs. I have seen and spoken with some of them, and they took very little pains to disguise the terrible facts.

The gaolers grow rich on the money they wring from the inmates of the cells. The prison-keeper of Bitlis Prison, Abdoolkader, a wretch who, God having presumably made him, may be called a man, earns enormous sums in this way. He lately spent £500 on his house, and two or three Turkish merchants are said to be doing business on his capital, although his salary is only about 50s. a month. These sums are received as bribes not for any positive return made to the prisoners, but for mere relief from torture

employed solely for this purpose. The following case may give some idea of the nature of the relief thus highly paid for. Some five months ago three men of the village of **Krtabaz** were arrested and imprisoned.¹⁵ The fact that they were released without trial ten weeks later is evidence enough of their innocence of crime. They were taken to the prison of **Hassankaleh**. The room in which they were confined was overcrowded. The term overcrowding does not connote the same thing in Armenia as in European prisons. They had no room to lie down at all. Some Koordish prisoners confined in the same dismal den, who enjoyed special privileges, had but two and a half feet space to sleep in. In one corner of the dungeon a hole in the wall represented the prison equivalent of sanitation, and these three Armenians were told that they must stand up by this hole, and might lean against the wall to sleep.

This they did for fifteen consecutive nights. The stench, the filth, the vermin exceed all conception. After the lapse of fifteen days, by dint of starving themselves, they were enabled to give part of their food to some of the Koords, one of whom allowed the Armenians to take his place in turn during the day. This was not much, for the Koords themselves had only sitting space, about 2½ feet long; still it did afford relief. But the Koord was severely punished for this benevolence or enterprise. His rations of bread were cut off, and he was put in irons for several days. The men he thus befriended, who now aver they owe their lives to him, were notables of their village, and innocent persons to boot, who were released some weeks later because “they had done no wrong.”

And yet the Turk, we are told, is a true gentleman, while the Armenians are lying thieves. Seeing how much depends upon definitions, there may perhaps be a sense in which that is true. But even a gentleman is expected to kill his useless cats and dogs in a humane way, and should not an Oriental gentleman be asked to slaughter his Armenians without torture? Would it not be a humane act on the part of our late Liberal Government had it arranged at least for the painless destruction of Armenian men, women, and children? Chloroform, prussic acid, or electricity would surely be an improvement upon *Sheitantopy*, the Standing Box, and red-hot ramrods, and the Armenians or their friends would then have something to thank us for. The idea is not perhaps thoroughly Christian, but surely it is relatively humane. Whatever we may think of the suggestion in theory, few men would hesitate in practice to give their sisters, wives and sons the chance of putting an end to their sufferings, were they in the position of the Armenians.

“The Armenians could help themselves if they really wished,” I lately heard an Englishman say, with a serious and convinced air; “they have only to turn Mohammedan. Surely God would not punish them for that.” It is certainly true that the moment they embraced Islam their troubles would cease, and that now, though martyrs by suffering, deprived of the palm, they are but contemptible “criminals” in name. Many of those whose flesh was weak, however willing may have been the spirit, did renounce their faith, and others are preparing to do likewise. Some of those with whom I conversed asked me whether I would advise them to save their families from dishonour and death by proclaiming that God is one and Mohammed is his prophet. I replied by expressing a hope, which I but partially entertained, that Christian Europe would come to their aid in good time and relieve them of the necessity of deciding between such painful alternatives. One thing is certain; if they embrace Islam, they must do it seriously and for good. There can be no recanting later on as violent death in its most hideous forms would be the certain penalty. The following story is calculated to bring out in strong relief the temptation which the Armenians have to give up their faith. The narrative will be found interesting on other grounds besides.

Melik Agha was a notable and noble Armenian of the village of **Abri (Boolanyk District)**, blessed with sons and grandsons, cattle, sheep, land, corn and hay in abundance, a sort of Armenian Job on a small scale. A noble Mohammedan of the same village, Kiamil Sheikh by name, envying his riches, desired to

¹⁵ Their names are Vehret, Mardiross Der Kasparian, and Goolbeg.

draw them to himself, and failing that, to destroy them and their owner. Last autumn for this purpose he had Melik's hay, corn, &c., burned to ashes. Then the Sheikh's men came and took away five of his horses and killed 150 of his sheep, leaving their carcasses to rot where they fell. This was wanton waste in a country where people are continually poor and frequently hungry. Melik therefore went to **Kop** where the Kaimakam resides and invoked the strong arm of the law. While he was in Kop complaining, and his sons were away on business the Sheikh's people, ever on the watch, dropped into his house, murdered the two children of Melik's eldest son and abducted their mother, who was very far gone with child. Melik Agha, hearing of this calamity, set out for Erzeroum to lay the matter before the chief authorities of the Vilayet. The upshot of his application was that Selim Pasha was deputed to inquire into the business and to get the woman back, the children, of course, could not be resuscitated nor could their murderer be punished. The captor refused to deliver up the young woman, saying, "She will publicly declare that she embraces Islam." Then the Pasha, turning to Melik, asked: "What will you say or do if your daughter-in-law does publicly affirm that she becomes a Mohammedan?"

"I shall say that we too will become Mohammedans rather than allow our wives and daughters to pass into other hands." Then the woman was fetched, but seeing her surrounded by Sheikhs, and afraid of speaking the truth, Melik said to the Pasha: "She is ill. In a few days she will become a mother. Give her peace until then, and meanwhile send her to any Turkish house you like in Erzeroum. In a fortnight we shall hear what she has to say." To this all agreed, and the Pasha departed. Three days later the woman's husband (Melik's eldest son) was killed by Kiamil's people in broad daylight. Even the Turkish family in which the woman lived were horrified, and requested the Sheikhs to come and take her away, as they refused to have anything more to do with the business.

Soon after this, Melik's second son, Mgirdeetch, shot two of the Sheikhs in the field. It was a very wrong and un-Christian thing to do, and cases of the kind give correct people in Europe a pretext for complaining of the vindictiveness of the Armenians. What he should have done, we know, was to entertain the Sheikhs at dinner, or at least to let them pass on in peace; though there are certain highly civilised Europeans - nay, ministers of Christian Churches known to me, who virtually say:

"God be praised for every instinct which rebels against a lot,
Where the brute survives the human and man's upright form is not,"

However this may be, Mgirdeetch and his younger brother feeling that they and their relatives were doomed, ran into the house of Mussah Bey and proclaimed themselves Mohammedans. Then they sent a messenger to their father informing him of what they had done and exhorting him to go and do likewise. And he did. A Mullah was appointed to teach the newly converted family the doctrines and worship of Islam, and as fate would have it, the Mullah in question was a man who had been Melik's faithful servant for many long years, and was far more disposed to become a Christian than his former master was to recognize the teachings of the Koran.¹⁶ Melik having discussed his plans with this friendly Mullah, sent his widowed daughter with a grown-up girl and three boys to Russia. When they drew near to the frontier, at **Gara-Ghedook**, the Koords attacked them and strove to obtain possession of the girl. But she held her mother's hand and refused to be delivered up to the lusts of these savages. Then the Koords shot her dead. Her mother took the body on her back, and carried it to the village **Ghairavank**, about three miles from **Kaghziman**, where it was buried by Father Raphael. After some time Melik himself and the other members of his family escaped to Russia, leaving behind his house, lands, hay, corn, cattle, &c., and taking

¹⁶ The Mullah also went to the famous Armenian monastery Etchmiadyin, where, it is said, he embraced Christianity.

only a little money, of which the Koords robbed him on the road. He was thankful to God for having allowed him to get across the frontiers with his life.

And the feeling is fast growing among Armenians that this is the only favour, human or divine, for which they will ever be called upon to feel grateful. Not that they have not been told over and over again to hope, even by ourselves, who having first hindered Russia from coming to their assistance and undertaken to see them properly governed, gave a free hand to the Turks to inaugurate a Dahomey in the five provinces. The darkest shadow, no doubt, is often no more than the proof and promise of a genial sun; but not for those creatures that live in the perpetual darkness of unexplored caverns. The Armenians are Christians, and they look up to God for protection, seeing that they have no one else to look to. But Baal on Mount Carmel was not more indifferent to the fate of his worshippers than He seems to be. Christianity is a good lode star, but not for those whose tears have made them blind.

It is no easy thing for an Armenian man to cross the frontier and enter Russia, if he possess a gold or silver coin or an article of clothing; nor for a woman to leave the country without first undergoing indignities the mere mention of which should make a man's blood boil with shame and indignation. "Oh, but these things are not felt so acutely by Armenians as they would be by Europeans," said an English lady to me a few days ago: "the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, don't you know." It may be so; but I have seen and conversed with hundreds and hundreds of Armenian women lately, and I found no signs of the tempering process. Whatever vices or virtues may be predicated of Armenian women, chastity must be numbered among their essential characteristics. They carry it to an incredible extreme. In many places an Armenian woman never even speaks to any man but her husband, unless the latter is present. Even to her nearest and dearest male relatives and connections she has nothing to say; and her purity, in the slums of Erzeroum as in the valleys of Sassoun, is above suspicion. Yet these are the people who are being continually outraged by brutal Koords and beastly Turks, oftentimes until death releases them. But the difficulty of emigrating from Turkey, with money, clothing, or women, will be best understood in the light of a few concrete examples. Not that the Turks object to their leaving. On the contrary, and this is the most conclusive proof of the existence of the Plan of Extermination, they actually drive them over the frontier and then persistently refuse to allow them to return.

Sahag Garoyan, questioned as to the reasons why he and his family of ten persons emigrated from his village of **Kheter** (Sandjak of **Bayazid**), deposed as follows:

We could not remain because we were treated as beasts of burden by Rezekam Bey, son of Djaffar Agha, and his men, who belong to his Majesty's Hamidieh corps and can therefore neither be punished nor complained of.. I emigrated towards the end of last year. Rezekam had come with his followers, as if it were war time, and taken possession of the houses of the Armenians, driving the occupants away. Only seven families were allowed to stay on. The others, having no place to go to, took refuge in the church. We had to feed the Koords for three months, giving them our corn, sheep, &c., and keeping their cattle in fodder. We had to serve some of them as beasts of burden.¹⁷ Rezekam himself paid a weekly visit to the village of **Karakilisse**, and levied a contribution of £10 Turkish on the inhabitants, besides hay, barley, &c., for his men. At last, unable to bear this burden any longer, we addressed a complaint to the authorities. They told us to be gone. Then a Koord, named Ghazaz Teamer, ordered us to sign a document setting forth that we were prosperous and happy. This was to be sent to Constantinople, as he wished to be appointed Yoozbashi of the Hamidiehs. No one signed the paper, whereat Teamer grew angry, and killed Avaki and his brother. Five months later he killed Minass, son of Kre, of the village of **Mankassar**. When winter came on last year, Rezekam Bey imprisoned our neighbour Sarkiss, son of Sahag, had his head plunged in cold water and dried; after that it was steeped in petroleum and his hair burned off. Then he endeavoured to violate Sara, Sarkiss's sister, but she was

¹⁷ This is no uncommon thing in Armenia.

smuggled away in time. Rezekam's servant, Kheto, dishonoured Moorad's wife; and a few days later entered the house of Abraham, an inhabitant of the same village, commanding him to go and work for Rezekam Bey. Abraham's wife, who was about to become a mother, begged that he might be allowed to stay at home; but Kheto kicked her in the stomach, and she was delivered of a dead child an hour or so after. Oh, we could not live there - not if we were beasts, instead of Christians.

Mgirdeetch Mekhoyan, aged thirty-five, of the village of **Koopedheran** (Sandjak of **Bayazid**), deposed:

I emigrated in 1894 because Aipa Pasha came with forty Koordish families, demolished our church, and took every thing we had.

The same story, with variations, comes from every Sandjak, almost from every village of the five Armenian provinces. Bedross Kozdyan, aged fifty-five, of the village of **Arog** (Sandjak of **Van**), testified:

I left my village and my country with my family in August last year (1894), because we were driven away by the Koords under Tri, son of Tshalo, who was abetted by the Turkish authorities. He first came and violated three girls and three young married women, whom he took away in spite of their cries and prayers. Three Armenians tried to protect the wretched women, who implored them not to let them go. But the Koords killed the three on the spot. Their names were Sarkiss, Khatsho, and Keveark. Next day he and his men drove off the sheep of the villagers. We complained to the Governor of **Van**, but he said he could not move in the matter. Ten days later the Koords came again, and carried away our wheat, barley, and live stock, and burned the hay which they could not transport. Then they knocked down the altar of our church, hoping to find gold and silver hidden away there. We again besought the authorities to protect us, but they replied, 'We'll slaughter you like sheep if you dare to come again with your complaints against good Mohammedans.' Then we took what we could with us and set out for Russia. When we reached **Sinak** six armed Koords attacked us, robbed us of everything we had, and sent us over the frontier with nothing but our clothes.

Sarkiss Mardirossian, of the village of **Utchkilisse** (Sandjak of **Alashkerd**), said:

I emigrated with my family of five persons because I could not live there. The Koords came and burnt all my hay, and being very well off I had a large quantity. Then they drove off the 100 cows belonging to us villagers, fifty oxen and 300 sheep. We could no longer pay the taxes and, fearing tortures from the Zaptiehs and also hunger, we had to go. In **Kiatoog** we were stripped of everything we had by the Koords and sent over the frontiers.

Ove Oviants of the village of **Leez**, Sandjak of **Boolanyk** deposed:

I emigrated with my family of eight persons because we were driven off by the Koords under Terpoi Neato with the connivance of the Imperial authorities. He came to our village and took three yoke of oxen, seventy sheep, and two mules. A month later they drove off seventy more sheep and two mules, the latter and seventeen of the sheep my own property. We were 250 Armenian families, but against a handful of Koords we could do nothing, having no firearms. One night they broke open my door and took away the clothing and ornaments of the women of our family and two cows. Modego Tilo seeing that one of our neighbours had a handsome daughter, carried her off and forced her to become a Moslem. The girl's father appealed to the Vali of Bitlis, who ordered the Kaimakam of **Kop** to flog him soundly and then imprison him for seven days. This was done. He was warned on being released, that if he complained again he would be tortured to death. My family and four others then left for Russia. At Apazin the Koords attacked us and took everything we possessed.

Khatsho Garabedian, of the village of **Kiavoormi** (Sandjak of **Khnouss**), declared:

I am forty-five years of age. The reason I left with my family was because the Turkish authorities allowed the Koords under Heasso to strip me of nearly everything I possessed, and then the Turkish Zaptiehs came and demanded the taxes, which I had no means of paying. The chief of these Zaptiehs then said: 'You have no money but you have a pretty wife. Lend her to me and I will give you a receipt for the taxes.' I contrived to have my wife taken to another house, and when the Turkish official saw that he could not dishonour her, he punished me. First, cold water was poured over me, then dung and other filth was rubbed into my face, and a strap thrown round my neck. In this way I was dragged

through the village. On my return they took my ox, the only possession that was still left me, and had it not been for that ox they would have taken my life. I then fled with my family, and we had only two Turkish pounds in money among us. The soldiers, however, stopped us and made us deliver that up, and we entered Russia as poor as the day we were born.

The Plan of Extermination is obviously working smoothly and well. The Christian population is decimated, villages are changing hands almost as quickly as the scenes shift in a comic opera, and the exodus to Russia and the processions to the churchyard are increasing. This is not the place to give a list of Islamised villages, but a typical case may help to convey an idea of the process that is going on even now. In the province of Alashkerd, which borders upon Russia, there are five villages to the east of **Karakilisse**, named respectively, **Khedr** (or **Kheter**), **Mangassar**, **Djoodjan**, **Ziro** and **Koopkheran**. These villages Eyoob Pasha sent his sons to occupy. Koords of the Zilanlee tribe, they are all officers in the Hamidieh corps. General Eyoob has three sons, Rezgo Bey, Khalid Bey, and Yoossoof Bey, and these gallant officers with their followers set out last spring and took the villages for themselves.

There were about 400 Armenian houses there at the time, or, say roughly, some 3000 Christian inhabitants. There is not one there today. Only one individual named Avedis Agha has remained, and even he lives not in one of the four villages, but in **Yoondjaloo**. He was a wealthy man when the Koords arrived; he is indigent now. The Armenians were completely driven out in the course of a few months by methods which may be termed somewhat drastic. For example: one day the Koords met Markar, son of Ghoogo, in the fields carrying home his corn. They demanded his araba (cart). He replied that it was engaged now, as they could see for themselves, but that he would give it later on. They killed him on the spot for disobedience and threw his body on the cart. Thirty villagers went with their children to complain to the Kaimakam in Karakilisse. The Kaimakam caused them to remain waiting in the open air for eleven days before he would hear them. And having heard them, he told them to go to Russia.

In the Vilayet of **Bitlis** (Kaza of **Boolanyk** and Sandjak of **Moush**) there is a village named **Kadjloo**, which, being interpreted, means "Village of the Cross." It is a village of the Crescent now. The means by which the sudden change was effected are identical in character with those already described. Mohammed Emin led a number of Koords (outcasts from the Djibranlee and Hassnanlee tribes) against the village, took it, so to say, by storm, and, to use their own picturesque expression, "sat down in it." Happily it is situated only five miles distant from the seat of the Turkish Deputy Governor, but, unhappily for the people, he refused to move a finger, and they were all driven off like sheep. Perhaps this is one of the cases in which the wind is tempered to the shorn sheep?

Then the conquerors set about raiding the neighbouring villages, and in particular **Piran**, which is about a mile further off. These would likewise have changed hands had it not been for a bright idea of one of the chief villagers, at whose suggestion a Koord named Assad Agha was invited to come and quarter his men in Piran, accepting for himself twenty corn-fields, ten meadows, and a spacious two-story house, which was built expressly for him by an architect from Bitlis, in return for which he undertook to protect the Armenians from Mohammed Emin and his merry men.

Three hundred and six of the principal inhabitants of the District of **Khnooss** gave me a signed petition when I was leaving Armenia, and requested me to lay it before "the humane and noble people of England." In this document they truly say:

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

was raised for mercy, no hand extended to help us. That process is still going on, but it has already entered upon its final phases, and the Armenian people are at the last gasp. Is European sympathy destined to take the form of a cross upon our graves?

I have also received two touching appeals from the women of Armenia, sealed with their seals, and addressed to their sisters of England. What they ask is indeed little, that they be protected from dishonour. And, until the General Elections gave us a strong Government, which knows its own mind it seemed as if these women were asking for the moon.

English people have not even a remote notion of the extent to which young married women and girls are outraged all over Armenia by Turkish soldiers, imperial Zaptiehs, Koordish officers and brigands; and outraged with such accompaniments of nameless brutality that their agonies often culminate in a horrible death. Girls of eleven and twelve, nay, of nine, are torn from their families and outraged in this way by a band of "men" whose names are known, and whose deeds are approved by the representatives of law and order. Indeed, these representatives are themselves the monsters, the bestial poison of whose loathsome passion is destroying "the subtle, pure, and innocent spirit of life. Rape, violation, outrages that have no name, and whose authors should have no mercy, are becoming the commonplaces of daily life in Armenia. And the Turkish "gentleman" smiles approval. I have myself collected over 300 of these cases, and I have heard of countless others.

In 1893 the Hamidieh soldiers entered the house of Khoomar (village of **Tortan**), ordered couches to be prepared for them, and then had the young women of the house brought, and delivered up to their foul lusts.¹⁸ In **Baiboord**, between **Erzeroum** and **Trebizond**, the Imperial soldiers ravished Fenedo, daughter of Heyerape, and then forced her to become a Mohammedan. In **Dooman** (Sandjak of **Khnooss**) Khalo and his comrades seized the young daughter of the Armenian priest, raped her in turn, and forced her to profess the Mohammedan faith. In the same village Mootafee raped Varo, daughter of Shebo, and compelled her to become a Mohammedan. In **Tortan** a young girl, Dilbar, daughter of Asso, was raped by two Koords. Complaint was made to the Turkish authorities, but in vain. A few days later. the Turks themselves, five in number, raped two other young girls, Toolerand and Yaghood. Mardiross, Yengoyan, of the village of **Badivegan**, was compelled to give up his twelve horses, then to entertain three Koords, and lastly, to deliver up his wife for them to dishonour. Last year a young girl named Mariam, daughter of Solomon, of the village of **Kortaz**,. was raped by Khalo, who carried her off, and forced her to embrace Islam. In 1893 six Koords came to the village of **Tshekhi**, entered the house of Garabed Ghiragossian, and compelled the host to provide them with an abundant meal and their horses with fodder. Having eaten their fill, they went out into the garden and partook of green fruit and cucumbers till they sickened. Then they accused Garabed of having poisoned them, and set about punishing him condignly [deservedly]. They tied him tightly to a pillar in the apartment, then seized his wife and each of them dishonoured her in turn. After this they told the wretched man that they would set him free if he paid them a certain sum for his liberty.

On November 7 last a Turk of the city of **Bayazid** asked Avedis Krmoyan to pay a little debt. The Armenian, not having the money at the time, besought his creditor to wait a few weeks. The Turk refused, and insisted on taking Krmoyan's wife as a pledge that the money would be paid. Entreaties and

¹⁸ Deposition of Hagop Der Marclirossian and others.
Deposition of Haroothicon Haroothioonian.
Sandiak of Hassankaleh. Deposition of the man himself.
Sandiak of Hassankaleh.

tears were unavailing; the woman was carried off, and then forced to become a Moslem. She can never return to her husband again.

In the village of **Khosso Veran (Bassen)** a girl named Selvy was seized by a Turk as security for a debt contracted by her father. The creditor kept her three months and dishonoured her; nor would he consent to set her free until Giragoss Ohannissean sent bail for her. As the debt, however, is unpaid, the Turk has a mortgage on her still. This sort of thing cannot be said to be uncommon, for although I knew but three cases of it from personal knowledge, I heard of more than a score in different parts of Armenia.

The day after last Christmas Serop Sarkassian, a peasant of the village of **Osag, (Moush)**, was suddenly reduced to misery by a Koord named Magson, who, like his colleagues, has no need to fear the law. Magson burned down Sarkassian's corn granaries, and then ravished and abducted his two daughters. It is perhaps worth noting, as an indication of the extent to which the wind is tempered to the shorn sheep, that of these two girls, one, Fidan, was exactly twelve years of age, while her sister, Alinasd, was a child of nine years. And Magson? Magson is highly respected by his co-religionists, who are always delighted when Christians, men or women, are converted, or abducted, from religious darkness to the light of the true faith. Moslems had nothing but praise, therefore, for the Koords who, on December 23, last year, raped and carried off the little daughter of Khatchig, of the village of **Yondjaloo (Boolanyk.)**, or for the two followers of the Koordish chieftain, Teadjeen, who, in the village of Shervansheig (Boolanyk), violated Vartoohi, niece of Serko Gooshdyan, and forced her to abjure her faith. For such deeds are meritorious. It is not only absolutely useless, but often positively dangerous, to complain to the officials, who, from high to low, take an active part in this Oriental "sport" themselves. The Kiateeb of Alai entered the house of Ohannes Goolykian (village of Karatshoban in Khnooss) in broad daylight, and raped the daughter of Ohannes, who was fifteen years old, and then sent her off to Trebizond. Her father complained, besought the authorities to restore her, and it is only fair to say that, so far as I know, he was not punished for his temerity.

The Deputy-Governor of **Arabghir** actually arrested and expelled a number of the men of the town whose wives were considered to be among the most handsome women in Armenia. He next approached the latter, but was received with the scorn he deserved. Then these women shut themselves up in their houses, refusing to allow him or his men to enter, whereupon he told them, publicly and shamelessly, that if they wished their husbands to return, they must yield to his desires.

The following case is one in which I took a very lively interest because I am well acquainted with the victim and her family. Her name is Lucine Mussegh, her native village **Khnoossaberd**. Born in 1878, Lucine was sent at an early age to the Armenian Missionary school at Erzeroum, where she was taught the doctrines of evangelical Christianity, her father, Aghadjan Kemalian, having always manifested a strong sympathy for Protestantism. Armenian girls are in chronic danger of being raped by Turks and Koords, and Armenian parents are continually scheming for the purpose of shielding them from this calamity which, as we have seen, occasionally results in death. The means usually employed are very early marriages or attempts to pass off the girls as boys.¹⁹ I have known children to be taken from school, married, allowed to live a few months with their husbands or wives and then sent back to school again. This is what happened to Lucine, who, taken from school at the age of fourteen, was wedded to a boy of her own age, Milikean by name, and having lived some time with him under his father's roof, was sent to the Protestant school once more. One night, during her husband's absence from home, she was seized by

¹⁹ In the village of **Ishkhoo**, for instance, the daughter of Tepan Aoba was brought up as a boy. She was arrested and imprisoned some time ago in Erzeroum, for this, too, is a crime.

some men, dragged by the hair, gagged, and taken to the house of Hussni Bey. This man is the son of the Deputy Governor of the place.

He dishonoured the young woman and sent her home next day, but her husband refused to receive her any more, and she is now friendless and alone in the world. Lucine's father presented a complaint to the colonel of the Hamidiehs, and a petition to the parish priest. The Metropolitan Archbishop of Erzeroum likewise took the matter in hand, and appealed to the Governor-General of the Vilayet, and to the court of **Khnouss**. But all to no purpose. Lucine is now a pariah. In her Appeal to the Women of England²⁰, which is too long and too naïve to find a place here, Lucine says:

We suffered in patience when our corn, butter, and honey were seized, and we were left poor and hungry; we bowed our heads in sorrowful resignation when our kith and kin were cut down by the Koords and the Turks. Are we also to be silent and submissive now that our race is being poisoned at its source? Now that child-mothers and baby-daughters are being defiled and brutalised by savages? Say, Christian sisters, is there in truth no remedy? ... We ask for no revenge, for no privileges; we ask only that ... but need I be more explicit to English matrons, wives, and sisters? ... Although we are Armenians we are Christians; I was brought up in a Protestant school, as you were; I drew my moral sustenance from the Bible, as you did; I was taught to feel and think, as you were... For the love of God, then, whom we worship in common, help us, Christian sisters, before it's too late, and take the thanks of the mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters of my people, and with them the gratitude of one for whom, in spite of her youth, death would come as a happy release. - (Signed) Lucine Mussegh.

I have also received a piteous appeal to the women of England from some hundreds of Armenian women of the District of **Khnouss**, begging as an inestimable favour to be shielded from the brutal treatment to which they are all subjected. It is needless to publish it here. Written appeals are seldom very forcible. If the reader had seen the wretched women themselves, as I saw them, and heard them tell their gruesome tales in the simplest of words, punctuated by sobs and groans, emphasized by misery and squalor, they would be in a condition to form some idea of the state of things in Armenia, which in the good old times of theocracy would have brought down consuming fire from heaven. In the village of **Begli Akhmed**, for example, I met a woman of about twenty-eight, clothed in ragged pieces of dirty carpets, with a pale emaciated boy of twelve, suffering from a terrible cough, who looked like a typhus patient aged only six or seven. I asked her to tell her story, and this is what she said:

My name is Atlash Manookian; I come from the village of **Khrt**, (**Khnouss** District). We were very well off, but the Koords took away everything we had. Everything, Effendi; still my poor husband worked for me and the child here, though they told us to go. One day when I was bringing bread to my husband in the field, they struck me on the head and dishonoured me. That was in the daytime....

"It was at noon, mother, when father used to eat his bread, that they did that to you," broke in the ghost of a child. I never in my life witnessed anything more horrible than the sight of those two, friendless, hopeless wretches, as they stood there trembling in the cold, the dying child thus simply bearing witness that his mother was dishonoured in the fields by a number of neighbouring Koords.²¹

She then went on:

"I complained to the head officer, Sheikh Moorad, but the Bimbashi beat me cruelly about the head and back, and knocked me down. Then, last spring, when my husband was sowing corn Ali Mahmed came up and killed him." "With an axe, mother," said the boy. "We are now alone in the world, wandering and, begging, and nobody knows us," said the woman.

Having given her some coins, I hurried away, vainly striving to shake off the horrible impression which clung to me, like a hideous ghost, for weeks afterwards.

²⁰ She gave me an appeal to the women of England signed by herself, together with her photograph.

²¹ I possess the photograph of the wretched woman.

The massacre of Sassoun sends a shudder to the hearts of the most callous. But that butchery was a divine mercy compared with the hellish deeds that are being done every week and every day of the year. The piteous moans of famishing children; the groans of old men who have lived to see what can never be embodied in words; the piercing cries of violated maidenhood, nay, of tender childhood; the shrieks of mothers made childless by crimes compared with which murder would be a blessing; the screams, scarcely human, of women writhing under the lash; and all the vain voices of blood and agony that die away in that dreary desert without having found a responsive echo on earth or in heaven, combine to throw Sassoun and all its horrors into the shade.

Such are the things for which we are morally responsible; and in spite of the circumstance that the late Liberal Government was in possession of these and analogous facts, Lord Kimberley found it impossible to have them remedied and unadvisable to have them published. There is fortunately good reason to believe that Lord Salisbury, who alone among English statesmen seems accurately to gauge all the difficulties of this thorny question, will find efficacious means of putting a sudden and a speedy end to the Armenian Pandemonium.

E.J. Dillon