

"My Two Years of Torture in Ravished"

The Only Christian Armenian Kurds and the Wicked Hare Officials Reveals, for the First Wholesale Massacres and the of Young Women, Which She



The Kasab Tabouri, the famous "Butcher Regiment" of Kiamil Pacha, waiting at "Divrig Pass" to massacre a company of Armenians approaching from the other side of the pass. A little later these soldiers threw the Christian women over these cliffs in sport

By Aurora Mardiganian

(Continued from Last Sunday)

CHAPTER VI.—"Ta-a-lim el Almon!"

I HAVE often wondered since I came to America, where life is so different from that of my country, if any of the good people who sit and talk with me could imagine the sufferings of that night, the beginning of which I described last Sunday, when I lay in the moonlight on the desert, my hands fastened behind my back and my feet haltered to an Arab horse.

There seems to be so little of tragedy in this country—so little of real suffering. I can hardly believe yet, though I have been free so many weeks now, that there is a land where there is no punishment for believing in God.

It was only a few hours after the band of Kurds tired of amusing themselves with us and tied us to their horses when the dawn broke over us and the Kurds came out to untie their horses. But it had seemed as if those few hours would never end. We were too exhausted, too frightened and ashamed to talk with each other, and we feared to awake the Kurds lest our tortures begin again.

It is characteristic of even the fiercest Kurds that their captives always are fed. The Kurds will rob and terribly mistreat their victims, especially the women of the Christians, but they will not steal their food. When their captives have no food they will even share with them. The Kurd is more of a child than the Turk, and nearly all the wickedness of these bandits of the desert is inspired by their Turkish masters.

When we had eaten of the bread and drank the water they brought for us, the Kurds lifted us onto their horses and started to gallop toward the north. There were more girls than Kurds, and we were shifted from horse to horse frequently that double burdens might be shared among the animals.

We did not know where we were being taken, nor to what. After many hours of riding I was shifted to the care of a Kurd who would answer my pleading questions. He told me a great pacha was at Egin, a city to the north; that he had come down from Constantinople especially to take an interest in pretty Armenian girls. That he even paid money to have Christian girls who were healthy and pleasing brought before him. And that the "claw chief"—the lesser Kurdish chieftain—was taking us to Egin to this Pacha.

I wondered if I were to undergo such another experience as was mine at the hands of Kehmal Pacha, of which I told on a previous Sunday.

Egin is on the banks of the Kara Su, which is a branch of the Euphrates. From Erzinjan, Shabin Kara Hissar and Niksar, large northern cities, thousands of Armenians had been brought to Egin. Here special bands of soldiers had been stationed to superintend the massacres of these Christians. All around the hills and plains outside the city huge piles of corpses were still uncovered. We passed long ditches which had been dug by convicts released from Turkish prisons for that purpose, and in which an attempt had been made to bury the bodies of the Armenians. But the convicts had been in such a hurry to get done the work for which they were to be given their liberty that the legs and arms of men and women still stuck out from the sand which had been scraped over them.

There had been many rich Armenian families in Egin. It was the meeting place of the rich caravans from Samsoun, Trebizond and Marsovan, bound for Harpout and Diyarbekir. For many years the Turkish residents and the Armenians had been good neighbors. When the first orders for the deportation and massacres reached Egin the rich Armenian women ran to their Turkish friends, the wives of rich aghas and beys, and begged

them for an intercession in their behalf. There was at that time an American missionary at the hospital in Egin who had been an interpreter attached to the American Embassy at Constantinople. He procured permission from the Mutassarif to appeal by the telegraph to the American Ambassador, Mr. Morgenthau, for the Christian residents of the city.

In the meantime the rich Armenian women gave all their jewels and household silver and other valuables to the wives of the Turkish officials, and in this way obtained promises that they would not be molested until word had come from Constantinople. The American Ambassador secured from Talaat Bey, the Minister of the Interior, and Enver Pacha, the Minister of War, permission for the Armenians of Egin to remain undisturbed in their homes.

There was great rejoicing then among the Christians of Egin. A few days later the first company of exiles from the villages to the west reached the city on their way to the south. They had walked for three days and had been cruelly mistreated by the Zaptieths guarding them. Their girls had been carried off and their young women had been the playthings of the soldiers. They were famished also for water and bread, and the Turks would give them none.

The Armenians of Egin were heart-stricken at the condition of these exiles, but they feared to help them. The refugees were camped at night in the city square. During the night the Zaptieths and soldiers made free with the young women still among the exiles and their screams deepened the pity of the residents. In the morning the Armenian priest of the city could stand it no longer—he went into the square with bread and water and prayers. The Mutassarif had been watching for just such an occurrence!

The Mutassarif sent soldiers to bring the priest before him. He also sent for twenty of the principal Armenian business men and had them brought into the room where he and the priest were. As soon as the Armenians arrived his soldiers set upon the priest and began to torture him, to pull out his hair and twist his fingers and toes with pincers, which is a favorite Turkish torture. The soldiers kept asking him as they twisted their pincers:

"Didn't you advise them to resist? Didn't you take arms to them concealed in bread?"

The priest screamed denials. The twenty men had been lined up at one side of the room. In his trickery the Mutassarif had stationed his soldiers away from them. When the torture of the priest continued and his screams died away into terrible groans the Armenians could stand it no longer. They threw themselves upon the torturers—not to assault them, but to beg mercy for the holy man. Then the soldiers leaped upon them and killed them all.

The Mutassarif reported to Constantinople that it was impossible to longer obey the Ministry's orders to allow the Armenians in Egin to remain—that they had revolted and attacked his soldiers and that he had been forced to kill twenty of them. Talaat Bey sent back the famous reply which now burns in the heart of every Armenian in the world—no matter where he or she is—for they all have heard of it. Talaat Bey's reply was:

"Ta-a-lim el Almon is amusing. Try it."
"Ta-a-lim el Almon—the Cult of the Germans!"
Since that day the Christians of Armenia have understood many things—Ta-a-lim el Almon!

Afterwards I learned that those were the days of the execution of Belgian Christians by the German soldiers. And, two years later, when I crept into Erzeroum from my refuge in the desert when the Russians came, I

was told by the holy Armenian Bishop Sempad, who came with the Russians from the Caucasus, that captured Turkish officers had told him that it was the terrible Von der Goltz Pacha, the German commander of the Turkish army, who had urged the Sultan to practise upon his defenceless Armenian subjects "Ta-a-lim el Almon."

When the Mutassarif had received Talaat Bey's orders he issued a proclamation giving the Armenians just two hours to prepare themselves for deportation. The women besieged the Turkish officers and said to them: "See, we have given our pearl necklaces and precious stones to your wives, and we have given them many liras to give to you. Your wives promised us protection, and we have done nothing to abuse your confidence. Our men did not attack your soldiers in violence."

But the officers would only make light of them. "We would have gotten your jewels and your money anyway," they replied.

In two hours they had assembled—all the Armenians in the city. The soldiers went among them and took all the young women. These they took to a Christian monastery just outside the city, where there were several other Armenian girls residing as pupils.

The Armenians had many donkey and horse carriages. The Mutassarif had told them they might travel in these. The soldiers tied the women in bunches of five, wrapped them tightly with ropes, and threw one bunch in each cart. Then they drove away the donkeys and horses and forced the men to draw these carts in which their women folk were bound. The soldiers would not let husbands or brothers or sons talk to their women, no matter how loudly they cried as the carts were pulled along.

An hour outside the city the soldiers killed the men. Then they untied the women and tormented them. After many hours they killed all the women who survived.

The Mutassarif sent his officers to the monastery where the young women were imprisoned. The officers took with them Turkish doctors, who examined the young women and selected the ones who were healthy and strong. Those who were rejected by the doctors as being weak, or susceptible to illness, were taken out of the monastery and killed.

Of the others, the officers required all who were maidens to stand apart from those who were not. The brides and young wives then were told they would be sent to Constantinople, to be sold there either as concubines or as slaves to the farmer Turks. The maidens were told they might save their lives if they would forswear their religion and accept Mohammed. Some of them were so discouraged they agreed. An Imam said the re' ka (the Mohammedan creed) with them, and they were sent away into the hopeless land—to be wives or worse.

One maiden, the daughter of an Armenian leader who had been a deputy from that district to the Turkish Parliament, was especially pretty, and one of the officers wanted her for himself. The officer said to her:

"Your father, your mother, your brother and your two sisters have all been killed. Your aunts and your uncles and your grandfather were killed. I wish to save you from the suffering they went through, and the unknown fate that will befall these girls who are Mohammedan now, and the known fate which will befall those who have been stubborn. Now, be a good Turkish girl and you shall be my wife—I will make you not a concu-

ON these pages five weeks ago began the story of Aurora Mardiganian, the only Christian Armenian girl to escape the Turkish massacres of the Christians in Asia Minor, which began in her city, Tchamesh-Gedzak, near Harpout, three years ago on Easter Sunday.

Little Aurora's father and elder brother met their death in the Turkish prison. Aurora, although only fourteen, was a well-developed and a very pretty girl. The Turkish governor had already marked her for his harem. He promised to spare her mother and brothers and sisters if she would join his harem slaves.

It was a terrible choice for the girl to make—the certain slaughter of all that were dear to her or the subjection of her own pure self to this Turkish brute. But the poor mother, clasping the child in her arms, refused to let her make the sacrifice. She must ask the clergyman at her church—and the holy man told her that even as Christ had willingly given up his life to the Roman persecutors, so she and all who loved the Saviour must be ready to make the same sacrifice to inherit life everlasting.

Then the Pacha summoned all the Christian men and massacred them. The Turks carried off to their harems scores of the prettiest girls. Aurora and her sister managed to elude the Turkish soldiers only for a while.

Then with the 4,000 Christian women and children of her city, Aurora was taken into the desert, where, after long hours of suffering at the hands of the cruel Zaptieths, she was stolen with other pretty girls by Musa Bey, the notorious Kurd chieftain. Musa Bey sold her to Kehmal Efendi, from whom she escaped by jumping into the Euphrates. She rejoined her party of refugees in the desert, and again took up the long tramp under the cruel scourging of the Zaptieths. She has told of the fate of the young women of Keban-Maden, and of the "Butcher Shop" at



Arabkiro. T of Kurds and the permission Syrian Relief riences will b

bine but a wife and you will live in peace and happiness. What the girl replied was so well remembered by the Turkish officers who heard her that they told of it afterward among themselves until it was known through the district—it was repeated to me by a good American doctor who was then witnessing the suffering in Egin, a who tried without success to save me.

She looked quietly into the face of the Turkish officer and said:

"My father is not dead. My mother is not dead. My brother and sisters, and my uncle and aunt and grandfather are not dead. It may be true you have killed them, but they live in Heaven. I shall live with them. I would not be worthy of them if I proved untrue to the God and mine. Nor could I live in Heaven with the if I should marry a man I do not love. God would like that. Do with me what you wish."

They took her out in front of the monastery and buried her in the ground until only her head and shoulders were above the earth. They left her there with Zaptieth who was ordered to report if she should agree to the officer's proposal. When they were alone, and Zaptieth wished, he took her out of the grave and buried her. She died after nearly two days and nights and the Zaptieth left her there when he returned to the city to report.

The other maidens who had refused to "turn" were given to soldiers to sell to the aghas and beys in the city. So there was none left alive of the Christians of Egin except the little handful of girls who were in the harems of the rich—worse than dead.

When the Kurds carried me and the other girls they had captured into Egin they rode into the centre of the city. We begged them to avoid the crowds of Turkish men and women on the streets because of our nakedness. They would not listen. The men and women jeered us as we were carried along.

We were taken into the courtyard of a large building which I think must have been a Government building. There we found, in pitiable condition, hundreds of other Armenian girls and young wives, who had been stolen from bands of exiles from the Erzinjan and Sivas districts. Some had been there several days. Many were unclothed as were we. Some had lost their minds and were raving. All were being held for an audience with the great pacha, who had arrived at Egin only the night before.

This pacha, we soon learned after our arrival, was the notorious Kiamil Pacha, of Constantinople. He was very old now, surely not less than eighty years, yet he carried himself very straight and firmly. Once, many years before, he had been the governor of Aleppo and had become famous throughout the world for his cruelty to the Christians then. It had been told in our city ago our people that he was responsible for the massacres of 1894, and that he had been removed from office once the request of England, only to be honored in his retirement by appointment to a high post at Constantinople by the Sultan.

With Kiamil Pacha there was Boukhar-ed-D