

Stripped, Martyred Armenia

Girl to Escape at Last from the Murdering Turks and
 Arms of the Sultan's Bloodthirsty
 Time, the Details of the
 Seizure of Thousands
 Witnessed



Today she tells of her experience again in the hands of the "crucifixion" at the city of Malatia. With the aid of the American Committee for Armenian and Assyrian Relief, New York City, the diary of her terrible experience printed from Sunday to Sunday on these pages.

Shakir Bey, who, I afterward learned, became the principal agent of Talaat Bey and Enver Pacha in conducting the massacres in all Armenia, beginning that terrible Easter Sunday, of which I have written before.

A regiment of soldiers had come from Constantinople with Kiamil Pacha, and were camped just outside the city. This regiment later became known as the "Kasab Tabouri," the "butcher regiment," for it participated in the massacre of more than 50,000 of my people, under Kiamil Pacha's orders.

Kiamil Pacha and Boukhar-ed-Din Shakir Bey came to the building where we were kept and sat behind a table in a great room. Then we were taken in twenty at a time. Even those of who were nude were compelled to stand in the line which faced his table.

The pacha and the bey looked us over when we stood before them. They were very cruel looking men, and the officers who had come from the north with them were pitiless. That which happened to the young women with me was when called before these officials was what happened to all the others.

"His Majesty the Sultan, in his kindness of heart, wishes to be merciful to you who represent the girlhood of treacherous Armenia," said Boukhar-ed-Din Shakir, while Kiamil looked at us silently. "You have been selected from many to receive the full blessing of His Majesty's pity. You are to be taken to the great cities of Islam to the north, where you will be placed under imperial protection in schools which are to be established for you, and where you may learn of those things which it is well for you to know, and forget the teachings of rebellious unbelievers. You will be kindly treated and given in marriage as opportunity arises into good Moslem homes where your behavior will be the only measure of your content."

That is how I remember his words, as truly as I can translate them. No girl answered him. We knew better than to put faith in Turkish promises, and we knew what even that promise implied—apostasy.

"Those of you who are willing to become true Moslems will state their readiness," the bey continued. Though I cannot understand them, I cannot blame those who gave way now. The pacha and the bey, or their officers, said nothing more. They just burned us with their cold, glittering eyes, and waited. The strain was too terrible. Almost half the girls fell onto their knees or into the arms of stronger girls, and cried that they would agree.

Boukhar-ed-Din Shakir waved his hand toward an officer who stepped forward, with his aides, and escorted or carried these girls into another room. We never heard of them again. Kiamil still looked coldly and silently at those of us who had refused. The bey said not a word either, but raised his hand again. Then soldiers who stood behind the officers stepped forward and began to beat us with long, cruel thongs.

We fell to the floor under the blows. The soldiers continued to beat us with slow, measured strokes—I can feel them now, those steady, cutting slashes with the



TWO PHOTOGRAPHS OF MME. SANTUKHT, WIFE OF THE RICH BANKER, GARABED GHOUGASIAN, OF TCHEMESH-GEDZAK, ARMENIA.

The photo on the left was taken the day Mme. Santukht was removed from her luxurious home with the other women of her city. She had just ridiculed the efforts of the Pacha to persuade her to change her religion. The photo on the right was taken by a Swiss missionary when Mme. Santukht reached the city of Malatia with the surviving exiles of Tchamesh-Gedzak.

These two photographs are the most remarkable evidence extant of what the Armenian deportations meant to refined, delicate Christian women.

whips the Turks use on convicts whom they bastinado to death. A girl screamed for mercy and shouted the name of Allah, that the Turks might know she could not hold out. They carried her into the other room. Another could not get the words out of her throat. She held out her arms toward the pacha and the bey, taking the blows from the whip on her hands and wrists until they saw that she had given in and carried her out. Others fainted, only to revive under the blows that kept on.

Twice I lost consciousness. The second time I did not come to until it was over and, with others who had stayed true to God, I had been left in the court yard.

I think there were more than four hundred young women in the courtyard when I first was taken into it.

The warning taunt of the Zaptieths.—Sixteen Christian girls stripped and crucified at the side of the road into the city of Malatia as a warning to the thousands of exiled Armenian girls who passed that way of the fate that would be theirs in the city if they refused to obey the orders of their masters.

Not more than twenty-five were with me now—all the rest had been beaten into apostasy. No one can tell what became of them, except by the rumor that Kiamil and Boukhar-ed-Din Shakir sent more than a thousand Armenian girls to Kiamil's estates on the Bosphorus, where they were cared for until their prettiness had been recovered and their spirits completely broken, when they were distributed among the rich beys and pachas who were the political associates of Kiamil, Boukhar-ed-Din Shakir Bey, and Jevdet Bey of Van, to whom I was later sold.

Four days we were kept in the courtyard, with nothing to eat but a bit of bread each day. Three of the young women died of their wounds. Nearly all were too weak to stand during the first day or two. Often Turkish men and women would come to look into the yard and mock us. Little Turkish boys sometimes were allowed to come into the courtyard and throw stones at us.

On the fourth day we were taken out by bashi-bazouks, which are convicts who have been armed by the Turks and given police power over Christians, to join a party of a thousand or more women and children who had arrived during the night from Baibourt, south of Trebizond. All the women in this party were middle-aged or very old, and the children were very little. What girls and young women were left when the party reached Egin had been kept in the city for Kiamil and Boukhar-ed-Din-Shakir Bey to dispose of. The older boys had been stolen by Circassians to be brought up as field slaves.

There were almost no babies, as these either had died when their mothers were stolen or had been killed by the soldiers.

With this party we went seven hours from the city and were halted there to wait, we were told, for a larger party of exiles from near Sivas and one from Erzindjan, which were to meet near there on their way to Diyarbekiro.

Both these parties had to pass through Divrig Gorge, which was near where we halted. The exiles from Erzindjan never reached us. They were met at the gorge by the Kasab Tabouri, the butcher regiment brought from the north by Kiamil, and all were killed. There were four thousand in this party. Just after this massacre was finished the exiles from the Sivas neighborhood came into the gorge from the other side.

The soldiers of the Kasab Tabouri were tired from their exertions in killing the 4,000 from Erzindjan such a short time before, so they made sport out of their recep-

tion of those from Sivas, who numbered more than 11,000 men, women and children.

Part of the regiment stood in line around the bend of the gorge until the leaders of the exile party came into view. Panic struck the exiles at once, and they turned to flee back, despite their guards. But they found a portion of the regiment, which had been concealed, deploying behind them and cutting off their escape from the trap.

As the regiment closed in, thousands of the women, with their babies and children in their arms, scrambled up the cliffs on either side of the narrow pass, helped by their men folk, who remained on the road to fight with their hands and sticks against the armed soldiers, hoping the women could get away and some be saved by hiding in the sand.

But the Zaptieths and soldiers who accompanied the party surrounded the base of the cliffs and kept the women from escaping. Then the Kasab Tabouri killed men until there were not enough left to resist them. Hundreds of men feigned death among the bodies of their friends and thus escaped with their lives.

Part of the soldiers then scaled the cliffs to where the women were huddled. They took babies from the arms of mothers and threw them over the cliffs to comrades below, who caught as many as they could on their bayonets. When babies and little girls were all disposed of this way, the soldiers amused themselves awhile making women jump over—prodding them with bayonets, or beating them with gun barrels until the women, in desperation, jumped to save themselves. As they rolled down the base of the cliff soldiers down below would hit them with heavy stones or hold their bayonets so they would roll onto them. Many women scrambled to their feet after falling and these the soldiers forced to climb the cliffs again, only to be pushed back over by the soldiers above.

The Kasab Tabouri kept up this sport until it was dark. They were under orders to pass the night at Tshar-Rahya, a village three hours from the gorge, so when darkness came and they were weary even of this game they assembled and marched away singing, some with babies on their bayonets, others with an older child under their arms, greatly pleased with such a souvenir. Some salvaged a girl from the human debris and made her march along to unspeakable shame at the Tshar-Rahya barracks.

Only 300 of all the 11,000 lived and were able to march under the scourging of the handful of Zaptieths who remained to guard them. They joined us where we awaited them, and it was from the survivors I learned the details of the Kasab Tabouri's afternoon.

After seven days we came of Malatia, in the south, one of the great converging points for the hundreds of thousands of deported Armenians on their way to the deserts of Ourfa, which, by this time, I knew was the final destination of all who survived. During all those seven days I had prayed every hour to God that He would bring me once more to my mother, whom I asked God to save. When the minarets of Malatia came into view, I was much excited with the hope that perhaps my mother's party may have reached there and had halted for a time that I might find her there.

When we drew close to the city we passed along the road that many other exiles had walked just before. And there, as a taunt upon the Crucifixion and as a warning to such Christian Armenian girls as lived to pass that way into Malatia, the Turks had crucified on rough wooden crosses sixteen girls who had been very young and pretty. I do not know how long those bodies had been there at the roadside, but the vultures already had gathered, and banded, or Kurdish cavalrymen, kept guard to preserve the bodies as long as possible.

Each girl had been nailed alive to the cross, great cruel spikes through her feet and hands. Only their hair, blown by the wind, covered their bodies.

"See," said our guards, "see what will happen to you in Malatia if you do not please the Turkish masters."

(Continued Next Sunday)