

120. CILICLA: LETTER, DATED 20th JUNE, 1915, FROM DR. {SHEPARD OF AINTAB}, A FOREIGN RESIDENT IN TURKEY; COMMUNICATED BY THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR ARMENIAN AND SYRIAN RELIEF.*

The deportation began some six weeks ago with 180 families from Zeitoun, since which time all the inhabitants of that place and its neighbouring villages have been deported, also most of the Christians in Albustan and many from Hadjin, Sis, Kars Pazar, Hassan Beyli and Dort Yol.

The numbers involved are approximately, to date, 26,500. Of these about 5,000 have been sent to the Konia region, 5,500 are in Aleppo and the surrounding towns and villages, and the remainder are in Der-el-Zor, Rakka and various places in Mesopotamia, even as far as the neighbourhood of Baghdad.

The process is still going on and there is no telling how far it may be carried. The orders already issued will bring the number in this region up to 32,000, and there have been as yet none exiled from Aintab, and very few from Marash and Ourfa.

The following is the text of the Government order^f covering the case.—"Art. 2nd.: The commanders of the Army, of independent army corps and of divisions may, in case of military necessity, or in case they suspect espionage or treason, send away, either singly or in mass, the inhabitants of villages or towns and install them in other places."

The orders of commanders may have been reasonably humane, but the execution of them has been for the most part unnecessarily harsh and in many cases accompanied by horrible brutality to women and children, to the sick and the aged. Whole villages were deported at an hour's notice, with no opportunity to prepare for the journey—not even, in some cases, to gather together the scattered members of the family, so that little children were left behind. At the mountain village of Geben the women were at the wash-tub, and were compelled to leave their wet clothes in the water and take the road bare-footed and half-clad, just as they were. In some cases they were able to carry part of their scanty household furniture or implements of agriculture, but for the most part they were allowed neither to carry anything nor to sell it, even where there was time to do so.

In Hadjin well-to-do people, who had prepared food and bedding for the road, were obliged to leave it in the street, and afterwards suffered greatly from hunger.

In many cases the men (those of military age were nearly all in the Army) were bound tightly together with ropes or chains. Women with little children in their arms, or in the last days of pregnancy, were driven along under the whip like cattle. Three different cases came under my knowledge where the woman was delivered on the road and, because her brutal driver hurried her along, she died of haemorrhage. I also know of one case where the gendarme in charge was a humane man and allowed the poor woman several hours rest and then procured a wagon for her to ride in. Some women became so completely worn out and hopeless that they left their infants beside the road. Many women and girls

{American Relief Committee, 4 October 1915 publication, document 7}.

^f See Doc. 83 and Annex C. to the Historical Summary.

have been outraged. At one place the commander of gendarmerie openly told the men to whom he consigned a large company that they were at liberty to do what they chose with the women and girls.

As to subsistence, there has been a great difference in different places. In some places the Government has fed them; in some places it has permitted the inhabitants to feed them; in some places it has neither fed them nor permitted others to do so. There has been much hunger, thirst and sickness and some real starvation and death.

These people are being scattered in small units, three or four families in a place, among a population of different race and religion and speaking a different language. I speak of them as being composed of families, but four-fifths of them are women and children, and what men there are, for the most part, are old or incompetent.

If means are not found to help them through the next few months, until they get established in their new surroundings, two-thirds or three-fourths of them will die of starvation and disease.