

137. {AINTAB}: STATEMENT BY MISS {FREARSON}, A FOREIGN RESIDENT AT {AINTAB}, WRITTEN SUBSEQUENTLY TO HER DEPARTURE FROM TURKEY IN SEPTEMBER, 1915; COMMUNICATED BY THE REV. I. N. CAMP, OF CAIRO.*

It was in March, 1915, that the first refugees began to pass through {Aintab}. After they had once begun to come, there was scarcely a day when one or more parties did not pass through. Some were large, and some consisted of only five or six hundred. With the exception of one party, they all had to stay out in an open field without any protection from the cold and rain, or later, when summer came, from the burning sun. The exception was a party from {Marash}, who had paid £400 (Turkish) for the privilege of resting under some trees where there was water. This place was only five minutes' walk from the field where other parties were obliged to camp.

I myself one day saw an old woman beaten because, when opportunity came, she rushed off to get some water for a sick child. I do not want to give the impression that no one was allowed to get water, but I suppose the privilege was given according to the "bakshish" that had been paid. There were also some gendarmes who seemed to be thoroughly ashamed of their work, and who, so far as they dared, were merciful.

Each party had its own tale of horror. With few exceptions, they had been robbed; young wives and girls had been carried off; many had been dishonoured; many people had been brutally treated and had died on the road. One large party that had been on the march for four weeks were put into houses at Albustan, the occupants of which had been previously deported. They thought then that their journey was over, and held a praise-meeting after being comfortably settled. But they were at the mercy of the Turks, and all their young women and girls were carried off. Then they were sent on the march again; some of the girls were returned by the Turks, but most of them were kept.

The hard part for them was that they never got to the end of their journey. Just as soon as they thought they were at their destination and began to settle down and get a little work to do, they would at once be sent away from that place to another. We heard also that if money was given them they were obliged to move on. Any effort to give relief was looked upon as a defiance of the Government.

One Sunday afternoon a large party of refugees came to [Aintab] just at sunset. We heard they were faint with hunger, but no one was allowed to give them any relief. We knew that there might be an opportunity to give some relief after dark, if any one ventured to go then. Feeling that I must do something, I took our matron and went to

{Explanatory note by the Rev. I. N. Camp:—

The T of the narrative is Miss Frearson. The 'we' includes her and some other missionaries who got permission to go to Beirut. So far as is known, the other members of the party that came to Beirut are still there, not being permitted to leave the country. Under no circumstances whatsoever should this fact be published, nor should any names at all be printed. Anything appearing in print in America or England finds its way to Turkey. So the printing of names might easily lead to even greater difficulties for Americans and other foreigners in the interior, as well as for the Armenian survivors."}

see what we could do. As we drew near the camp, we met some Armenians who were on the watch for a chance to give out some bread, and who told us that it would evidently be impossible for us to give any food that night, but that perhaps we could give some in the morning. The next morning before dawn, we went again and found about four hundred Armenians of {Aintab} along the road. As they saw us passing, some called out: "It is no use for you to go; no one is allowed near." However, we passed on, and when we got to where the gendarme was, he very crossly ordered us away. It was light by this time. Our matron appealed to him for a long time without avail. Finally, however, he said: "Well, give what you have quickly; but this (pointing to me) must not go any further than here." While we were distributing the food, the gendarme got angry and ordered me away. Then three horsemen appeared on the scene. They scolded the man in charge because he had not already got the refugees started on their march, and told him he was too lenient with them. One of them leaped from his horse, and with a whip in each hand went towards the {Aintab} Armenians, who at once fled. He came to me and gave me a lash or two with the whip. I asked him what harm I was doing. He came again and shook me, saying: "You are from {Zeitoun}." (I had to dress as an Armenian in order to get to the refugees at all.) One of the two other officers came deliberately towards me with the intention of riding me down, but the horse turned his head after only bruising my arm. The matron, an Armenian woman, on seeing it, said: "She has done nothing wrong. She is no {Zeitoun}li. Your horse is more merciful than you." We turned to go, and to my surprise the horsemen began speaking German with one another. So far as I was able to tell, they were not Turks but German officers. When we got on to higher ground, we saw these three men ride on in the direction of {Zeitoun}. The refugees were sent in the opposite direction, and all the time they were preparing to start they were being beaten. Other gendarmes arrived, and from every direction came the screams of the people as the whips touched them.

One evening, Dr. {Merrill} and Mr. {Ranney} went for a walk just at dusk. They saw along the road what they at first took to be a bundle of rags, about which scavenger dogs were circling, but on going nearer they found it to be a dying-woman. After she had been refreshed by some warm milk which Dr. {Merrill} brought, she said: "Would that you had not brought me this, for I had longed to die." She soon did die. She was a rather young woman, and it was found out soon after her death that she was from a very good family.

Occasionally Dr. {Merrill} could get permission for a sick woman to stay until she was better; she would then be sent on with a later party. The first woman he helped in this way went on after a few weeks' rest with her new-born baby, but the second woman died. On another occasion, the head Armenian nurse at the hospital had been sent

"Outside {Aintab}, a woman gave birth to a child in the refugee camp. She was taken to the College and put into a small room there. In spite of the best of care, she died in a few days and the child a little later. In her most delicate condition, she had been driven, cursed and beaten along the road from {Marash}, some sixty miles away."—*Earlier and less detailed statement by the same witness.*

down with some necessaries to help a party. When she first got to the place, the gendarme refused to let her pass. She begged him, as he hoped for mercy from Allah himself, to allow her to go to the woman in particular need. Finally, he gave permission, but, having already given the order for the party to move on, he said that little time was left. When they were ready to depart, the gendarme began to beat the father of the baby, and even gave the mother of a few hours a lash with his whip. The nurse protested, and said that, if the poor woman must go on, an animal must be given her; so the gendarme went forward a few steps, knocked an old man off his donkey, and told the husband of the woman to put her on. We heard later that the woman died before she got to the opposite end of the city.

Every party would bring with them either old people who had been left on the road or children whose mothers had died and who had been left behind. Whenever we went to see refugees, the piteous appeals we heard to save young women and girls from the Turks were heart-rending. And we were powerless to help them! Again and again we were threatened with what would be done to anyone who dared to help any of the refugees. But in spite of these threats several of the {Aintab} people took babies who were left without any relatives. It was beautiful to see the love shown to these babies, many of whom were not at all attractive. The sad part of it was that, when the turn of the people of {Aintab} came to go, some were too poor to take these adopted children along with them; but all did so who possibly could. One good man had adopted a sick baby and a lame girl. When he and his large family were deported, he came to ask me whether I could take or support his own three-months-old baby, in return for which he offered me two rings, all that he could spare.

As the refugees were driven from their mountain homes, the blind, lame, and invalids were at first left in {Marash}. But after a time even they were driven forth. They left {Aintab} one hot afternoon, about three hundred in number, under the care of a brave young widow, who had had charge of them all the time. There were only fourteen donkeys for the whole party.

When people left their homes, it was natural that they should want to take as much as possible along with them—mats, food, clothing, &c. Villagers who owned animals, especially muleteers, were the best off, because when others wanted animals the Turks asked such exorbitant prices that the poor people did not know what to do, especially if they had old people or young children in their families. So the owners of animals, not having to hire any of the Turks, were better off. The load-animal question became more and more difficult as the refugees got farther away from their homes, till some in desperation would leave their few possessions by the wayside. The gendarmes generally told them that their goods would be forwarded to them. But in the case of some goods that one party had left nine hours from {Aintab}, we know that a gendarme brought them on to the city and sold them by public auction.

Mr. {Shepard} asked whether he might go to the places where needy refugees were, and give them some help, if he could get any money from the United States. This request was most emphatically refused. He said: "Why, they will die." The answer of the Turkish official was: "What do you suppose they are sent there for?"

When the first parties came, the Government sometimes issued bread, but this policy did not last long. Sometimes the people of the city would be allowed to give bread, but this was rare. There were always people waiting for a chance to get near and give aid to the refugees. We were on the opposite side of the city, but our colleagues were nearer to the refugees. So the head of the institution gave permission for the food to be cooked there. Then it would be taken secretly by the students to the refugees. Usually only one guard was on duty at night, so the food was usually sent down at three or four in the morning, the best being given to the guard in order that he might allow it to pass in. Later on, the women of the city formed a committee and collected food from anyone able to give it. There was also a relief committee of four, who did a great deal towards alleviating the distress by giving bread and by furnishing native shoes to those who had none. Later, one of the lay members of this committee, the one who had been most active in the relief work, was the first among the people of {Aintab}, after the exemption of the Protestants, to be deported. When he asked why he had to go, he was told that it was because he had fed the enemies of the Government.

If I remember correctly, it was either on the 30th or the 31st July that the first people from {Aintab} were deported. First the richest families of the Gregorians, and, later, the richest Protestants, were sent away. Just as the Protestants were leaving, we heard a rumour that they would not have to go, but they were hurried straight through to Hama, and other places, without the long delays on the road that others had had. We thought it was done purposely. The first party that went were attacked before they got to their first night's stopping-place, and had to protect their wives and daughters all night long. We heard later from Dr. {Shepard}, who was then in Aleppo, that he had seen many of them and been told their story: how they had to be on the alert all night long; how one or two were killed and some wounded, and how one had gone mad. Before we got this news, the brother of one of our teachers, who had been sent into the city by the officer whose servant he was, told us that while nearing the city the previous evening he had seen the MutessariPs son and four or five companions, all well armed, riding quickly out of the city in the direction in which the refugees had gone. We all thought that he had perhaps been sent to recall them, and were quite expecting to see them all come back again. Later we understood that it was this party who had attacked and robbed them.

Soon after the first party of Protestants were sent away, Dr. {Merrill} received telegrams from the U.S. Ambassador, from the Consul in Aleppo, and from Mr. {Peet} of Constantinople, saying that there would be no deportation of Protestants. Dr. {Merrill} took the three telegrams to the Mutessarif, who was not pleased and said that he had received no such news. Still, for a short time all was quiet, and it being time for College to open, the matter was talked over. Before any decision was reached, a student, a lurk, went to Dr. {Merrill} and asked when it would open, as if he were anxious to be back. Dr. {Merrill} took this as a sign that the Turks were not only willing but anxious for the College to begin; so, after conferring with the faculty, he told the enquiring Turk that

{For "we" read "we at the Orphanage."}

' {For "our colleagues were" read "the College was."}

they would open the following week. This, I think, was on Friday, and on Saturday all but two of the professors and teachers had notice that they must leave the city the following Monday morning. Dr. {Merrill} pleaded for time, but the Mutessarif was angry and asked him whether he did not know that he had power to send him away too if he wished to do so.

The professors were sent away the following Monday morning. A German lady, Mrs. {Daghlian}, formerly Miss {Alice Bewer (?Bauer) of Diisseldorf}, who was the matron of the hospital at {Aintab}, was ordered to go along with her husband, an Armenian professor, into exile. When Dr. {Merrill} went to the Mutessarif about it, he answered: "Is she not his property, and is he not an Armenian?" The German Consul was not able to get permission for her to leave the country when her husband was anxious for her to get away. We heard later from Mrs. {Daghlian} that they had only got just outside the city when a gendarme came round to each of them and said that, if they wanted to be guarded, they must give money. This they did. When they reached a little wayside station, they found many thousands of refugees waiting in an open field. On the fourth day of waiting, Mrs. {Daghlian} saw some German officers on a train, and obtained from them a pass which enabled her to board the train for Aleppo. On the fifth day, she and her husband and baby were allowed to go by train to Aleppo, but his family had to wait and go on with the rest of the refugees. They, after many weeks of travel and after paying exorbitant sums of money, were sent to a fellahin village. Prof. {Daghlian}, according to the latest report, was teaching for nothing in a Moslem school in Aleppo.

Three of the pastors at {Aintab} were imprisoned for months in dirty, dingy cells of the common prison. Three of the College professors had the same experience. Finally, permission was given for the gendarmes to take the pastors out long enough to preach, for it was feared they would otherwise go mad. The sermons they preached were said to be wonderful. These pastors were later released, but all the professors in the College were exiled except one, and another who had previously succeeded in getting away to Constantinople.

Soon after the crowds started, all kinds of sickness began and spread among the people, and later one of the two doctors left in {Aintab} was sent to look after them. Sometimes they would wait for weeks, expecting to be taken by train to whatever place they were to be sent to. Then they would be told that each must hire an animal for himself. The hire would be put up so high that all their baggage would have to be left behind. The gendarmes told them that it would be forwarded to them, but a little later it was placed in a house from which some of the people had been deported, and sold at auction.

When the people were told that they must go, they at once tried to sell some of their goods, so that they might have a little money in hand. But it cannot be said that they really sold them, for one heard of good wool mattresses selling for one piastre; the highest I heard of was for twenty piastres, while in ordinary times they would sell for a hundred. Large copper pans and basins were sold for a mere song, until one day two Jews appeared on the scene and began paying much better prices. But in three days these men were imprisoned, so that the Turks could once more get things for as little as they

pleased. Even goods that were being given to the poor by those having to leave were confiscated by the Government. Some antiquities and books that were being taken to the College shared the same fate. Anyone walking with a parcel was liable to be held up, searched, and robbed.

After the professors had been sent away, the pastors of the Protestant churches and the two remaining professors who had not been deported were put into prison. First, their homes were searched and all papers and any written matter were taken to the Sarai. The secretaries of the Christian societies were enquired about, and when it was found that some of them had been deported it was thought that they might be brought back; but they had not been brought back at the time of my leaving. While waiting in {Beirut}, I heard that those who had been imprisoned had been released.

About the time deportations began in {Aintab}, all the non-Moslem schools were taken possession of by the Government, except those belonging to the American Board. At the same time, the large Armenian church and one of the Protestant churches were seized, but before I left {Aintab} they were restored to their owners.

After the professors had been taken away, it was reported that no more Protestants, except those found at fault, would be sent away. But every day they kept sending a family or two away on the slightest pretexts. One of the relief committee workers was the first to be sent away. A letter said to have been sent to them, but which they never saw, was actually the alleged cause of deportation. The censor said that no mention of high prices, poverty, sickness, need of money, or slackness of work must be mentioned in letters. So we prayed that any letters that might be sent to us should make no mention of relief money or of any other forbidden subject.

As soon as it was officially announced that the Protestants would not be deported, they held a thanksgiving service, at which the one in charge said: "Now that we are permitted to stay in our city, we must be very careful to give no occasion of complaint to the Government. If they ask for our sons as soldiers, we must give them up without murmuring; if for money, or goods, or clothing for the soldiers, let us give as if we appreciated the privilege of staying in our homes. Let us show them that we are loyal to the country. Let no one take into his home a child or anyone else who has been told to go, whether they be of those passing through the city as refugees or from among our own friends and relatives in the town. Let us show the Government that we will do all that is asked of us."

The goods in the drapers' shops all belonged to the Armenians; but during the deportations the Turks took whatever they wanted and paid nothing, so the owners in some cases sold their goods for almost nothing, or gave them away, or closed their shops. Soon after deportation, it was impossible to buy a button, though some native material could be secured in native houses where they had looms.

When the first lot of people from {Aintab} were sent away, they were told that they were only going for a short time, and that they need not trouble about their homes and belongings, for the Government would carefully seal them and take care of their property. They had not been out of the city long when soldiers were quartered in the larger houses, some of which were rented for a trifle, the rent being paid to the

Government. The poorer houses were given to the poorer Turks. Every evening all the possible exits from the city were carefully guarded; if we went from one building to another, we were held up and asked where we were going and for what. If our servant was found outside, he would always be searched and sometimes struck at, and told not to be out so late again. In the early days we were not allowed out after sunset, and later we were told the same, even if the sun were shining. This was said not only to me, the subject of a belligerent country, but also to neutrals as well.

An old college student, whose home was at {Hussi Mansour (Adiaman)}, managed, through the kindness of a friendly Turk, to escape to {Aintab}. He told us that the men of his town were all killed. We had previously heard that the men of that town and of the next village had been taken for military service, and set to making a road to {Severeg}. As soon as the road was finished, the men were taken to the side of the road they had made and were killed—chiefly by the knife, for the officer in command had told the soldiers he commanded not to waste powder on the Armenians.

An Englishman who had been given permission to leave the country (we wondered whether he ever got out) told one of our ladies of the sights he had seen while waiting for the train. He had seen feet swollen all out of shape lifted up and beaten with the heavy end of a gendarme's gun, just because people had said they could not walk any faster.

The steward of the College at {Aintab} was sent away because his brother-in-law had sent his dentist's instruments to him with a letter, asking him to sell them and send the money on to him later, when he could tell him—the steward—where they were being deported to. But neither the instruments nor the letter ever reached the steward. He was merely told that they had been sent and that, because of it, he and his family of small children must go into exile. This was after the Protestants were told that they might stay.

Whenever the Turks thought that they had won any victory, they were almost unbearable, as, for instance, when word came that they had taken the Suez Canal. They then rejoiced both by day and by night, and were most insolent to Christians. An English flag was dragged through the filth of the streets, spat and trampled upon, &c. The noise continued all night long. At these times of supposed victories, they showed what they would do if ever they were really victorious.

It was beautiful to see the faith of some of the villagers. One evening a large party came in and very soon began singing hymns and holding a prayer-meeting. The following morning, when asked about it, they said that their pastor had been taken from them and killed, and that his last word to them was: "Keep up the prayer-meeting." And with kindling eyes they said: "We have never once missed it, though we have been seven weeks on the march."

Another party told how they had prayed that, if it were God's will, they might be spared the horrors of deportation, and said: "There must be some good in it for our nation, or God would not permit it. The only thing that troubles us is: Will our husbands ever be able to find us?" They little knew, poor women, that their husbands had already been killed, as we were told by others.

Just before the deportation began at {Aintab}, a high official, {Fakhri} Pasha, came and called together the leading people, both Moslem and Christian. In a very kindly manner, he asked the Christians whether they were being kindly treated by the Moslems, &c., &c. He said that he had heard certain things, and that, if there was any truth in the statement that Armenians were being ill-treated, he himself would hang the Turk, were it his own brother, who should dare to treat a Christian unkindly; and he begged the Armenians to speak out without fear. He then went straight from {Aintab} to {Zeitoun}, where he arranged for the deportation of all the {Zeitoun} and {Marash} districts. Such plans were evidently intended to throw the Armenians off their guard.

In {Fakhri} Pasha's Party there were three German officers, but I could not say that German officers were supervising the deportations. The German Consul went through {Aintab} to {Marash} and {Zeitoun} before the deportation began. Though some people blamed him for it, we did not think he had so much power.

A great many of the Armenian doctors were taken for the Army. When there was any sickness among the service corps, one of the three Armenian doctors left in {Aintab} was sure to be sent to attend the sick. In this way we lost a dear friend, who in the early days had been an assistant to Dr. {Shepard}. He was sent to a camp where the soldiers, nearly all of them Armenians, were working on a section of a branch of the Baghdad Railway; typhus had broken out among them. Very soon a telegram came, saying that the old doctor was ill. Though he was the oldest doctor in {Aintab} and had more Moslem patients than any other doctor in the city, no mercy was shown to him. Did he not belong to the accursed Armenian race? And was not his death of typhus, in the camp to which he had been obliged to go, a fate good enough for any such as he?

Early in March, 1915, the {Marash} Government took possession of Miss {Salmond}'s Orphanage and put Turks in charge of the girls and young women. Miss {Rohner}, a Swiss lady in charge of a German Orphanage at {Marash}, after all her charges had been turned loose for deportation, as were the inmates of all the German orphanages early in the war, took under her care some of the old girls who were married and living in the districts in which the first deportations had taken place. After she had kept them for a short time, she was told by the German Consul that she must give them up. She thought that if she could get to someone in authority she could present the situation in its true light, so she went to Constantinople, but returned disappointed.

Early in the autumn we heard of a reign of terror at Ourfa, so that the very mention of the place seemed to alarm people. We heard that three men, one of them being {Solomon Knadjian} Effendi, Miss {Shattuck}'s faithful helper in charge of industrial work employing more than 2,000 persons, had been banished. Later, they were brought back to the city and tortured. Later still, in writing to his wife, Mr. {Leslie} said that {Solomon} Effendi's children were in the same case as some other children, whom we knew to be orphans; so we inferred that he had certainly been killed.' Still later, a driver told how he had been engaged to take three men to Diyarbekir for court-martial. I hey

"More than a thousand."—*Earlier statement.*

•"The Protestant pastor and a doctor were also killed."—*Earlier statement.*

had gone but a short distance from Ourfa when the men were told to get out of the wagon. They were taken down a gully a short distance, and soon the driver heard shots. The four gendarmes came galloping up to the wagon and told the driver to drive on. One of them looked into the wagon and asked where the prisoners were. When the driver asked if they had not called them out of the wagon, he was told that he had allowed them to escape and that he himself must go before the court. So he had to drive back to Ourfa to the Sarai, where he was told to leave the things that belonged to the men he had started out with. Then he was allowed to go away free.

{Mr. Hagopian}, Miss {Shattuck}'s servant, had been killed, we heard, in a brutal way while he was going to Garmoush with some relief for a poor family. We also heard that there were two massacres at Ourfa, in the first of which only the men found in the streets were killed. The second time, homes were entered.

{Muggerdich}, one of my orphan boys, had gone with Dr. {Smith}, and was working for him when he was told to leave the country. He was tortured to make him tell something incriminating about Dr. {Smith}. Later, when Dr. {Shepard} tried to get some news about the boy from the Diyarbekir refugees at Aleppo, their answer was: "Do not ask us about any male over twelve years old, for, as far as we know, they were every one of them killed."

The general impression was that Mr. {Leslie} was poisoned. We heard that he was in danger of a mental breakdown; but, on the evening previous to my leaving {Aintab}, Dr. {Merrill} was told by a Moslem muleteer who had come from Ourfa that Mr. {Leslie} had either died or been killed. I was told that I must acquaint the Consul with what Dr. {Merrill} had heard as soon as I reached Aleppo. On my telling the Consul, he showed me a telegram he had recently received from Mr. {Leslie} himself, which read: "Am safe and well in Government House." Later, in {Beirut}, when we heard that he had poisoned himself, someone remarked that it would be easy for Mr. {Leslie} to be obliged to write and say that there was danger of a nervous breakdown, and then the way would be prepared for the news: "Poisoned himself." Someone else added: "Yes, just as was done when the prisoners were obliged to sign a letter, stating that they were all well, while at the very time there was an epidemic in their camp."

When we travelled ourselves from {Aintab} to Aleppo, we saw a large camp of refugees, some distance from the road which we were on, but close to the small station of Kotmo, which connects with the Baghdad Railway. We had heard before leaving {Aintab} that 37,000 were waiting for a train to take them on, but, judging from what we could see, there could not have been more than seven or eight thousand of them.

As we got near to Aleppo we passed a very long convoy of ox-wagons, mules, donkeys, and a few horses, carrying women, children, and some old men. Our driver got down and talked with a few. He was told that they were being sent from Adana and Mersina. They looked so much better off in every way than any refugees we had seen that they hardly seemed like refugees at all. There were many more men than usual among them.

Later, when we reached Aleppo, we were told that there were 20,000 refugees there, and that on some days the death-rate was as high as 400. A native doctor and his wife, wishing to give all their time to helping these poor people, had left their home and gone to the hotel in which we were staying. From them we got reports twice a day.

We heard of one party, who, when they left Harpout, numbered 5,000. Of this number, only 213 reached Aleppo. When they started, they were of all ages and both sexes. They went towards Aleppo down the Euphrates. When they came to the cross the rivers that flow into the Euphrates, all the able-bodied men were drowned and their bodies left in the water. Farther on, all the survivors—now only men, women and children—were entirely stripped of their clothing. Naked they waded through streams, slept in the chilly nights, and bore the heat of the sun. They were brought into Aleppo the last few miles in third-class railway carriages, herded together like so many animals. When the doors of the carriages were opened, they were jeered at by the populace for their nakedness. On their journey, they had come on a hot day in August to the banks of a river. There was a general rush to get water, but the gendarmes who were with them drew their revolvers and told them that anyone who got any water must pay a medjidia (about *30n. 2d.*) for it. Some were able to give it, but the majority were not. After waiting there for some time, they were told that they must strip and get through the water as best they could. They had the right to the animals that carried their possessions, for they had paid for them for two days longer. They clasped hands and waded across, but waited in vain for the gendarmes to come across with their animals and provisions. In this party were refined girls and young women from the best Armenian homes, who had been educated in the American colleges.

While waiting in {Beirut}, the President of the College got a telegram from the U.S. Consul in Aleppo, asking him to send some doctors, as the death-rate was very high—as high as 400 a day, we heard. The President thought it best to ask Djemal Pasha before doing anything. When he did ask him, the answer came: "No, you must not send anyone. Let your consul mind his own business!"

"Later, another convoy of exiles came up, and took this party of forty women on with them. — *Earlier statement.*