

SAW ARMENIANS DROWNED IN GROUPS

American Woman Whom Elkus Helped Tells Her Story of Massacres.

VICTIMS BOUND TOGETHER

And Then Thrown Into a River— Mrs. Dar Arsanian, Spared Be- cause of Her Nationality.

Special to The New York Times.

PORTLAND, Me., Feb. 1.—The young American woman who Abram I. Elkus, former American Ambassador to Turkey, says is the only living eyewitness to the atrocities of the Turks against the Armenians, excepting the Turks themselves, was found in this city today by newspaper men. She is Mrs. George Dar Arsanian of 27 Washington Avenue, and through the assistance of Mr. Elkus and ex-Ambassador James W. Gerard she escaped from Turkey and eventually returned to America.

Her first husband, Robert Agasarian, an Armenian by birth, but a naturalized American citizen and resident of this country for twenty years, was murdered, she says, by the Turks along with hundreds of others, and her little son was drowned in a river near the town of Ghmeshgasak, Turkey.

Before her first marriage Mrs. Dar Arsanian was Miss Ethel Marston, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Jackson Marston, and before going to Turkey was employed as a waitress in local hotels. She was married to her present husband, George Dar Arsanian, in May of last year.

"My husband," she said, "was born in Armenia, came to this country when a child, and had lived here eighteen years when we were married in 1909. He was a naturalized American citizen, and was a barber. In November, 1913, we went to Turkey to look after some property interests. Within one week after our arrival he was conscripted into the Turkish army. He protested that he was an American citizen. We were a long way from an American Consulate, and the Turks refused to release him until we paid them £50 in English money. He was not molested again until the fall of 1914, when he was taken for the second time, and forced to buy his freedom."

"Things went well with us until early in June of 1915. The war had involved all the nations, and Turkey had cast her lot with the Germans. Then the Turks started devastating the smaller States, plundering and murdering. Turkish police came into our village of Ghmeshgazak and rounded up all but seven men. These seven escaped into Russia.

"The men captured were marched off to the Turkish detachment in the village. My husband was taken along with the rest and later marched to another village. Finally my husband sent a note by a boy for me to come and see him. 'You and the children will not be harmed, but I am doomed,' he said. He realized that he would be murdered, and that money could not save him, as the Turks were determined to be rid of all able-bodied Armenians who refused to serve in the Turkish Army.

"I never saw him again. He was taken with other prisoners to Harpoot a few days later. His aunt afterward told me that she saw him bound, as was the custom, but she was not allowed to speak to him. He and the others were on their way to an execution of the grossest cruelty. We had seen these so many times there was no mistaking the inevitable result.

"I saw men taken from our village and marched in pairs to the banks of the river. They were bound up securely and ranged up in a long line along the bank of the river. They were then driven into the water at the points of bayonets and sabres, and as they rose again to the surface of the water they were beaten senseless and then left to drown. My godfather and his brother were among them, their request that they might die together being granted even by the cruel Turks. Old men were killed in their beds in the village. They brought even the priest, and a soldier slashed his head off, and it was kicked around the streets by these brutes in Turkish uniforms. I cannot begin to describe all the revolting scenes like this that I have witnessed.

"Kurds waylaid and robbed us on our way to a neighboring village, where we women and our children were ordered rounded up. Mobs came and looted the village, taking everything of value they wanted. Soldiers mingled in this robber band.

"I was taken to the house of a Turk and placed under his protection. Some one asked who the American woman was and I came forward and was assured that no harm would befall me. There I was kept a prisoner, but it was better for me, as Armenian women were massacred. My husband's cousin escaped by putting on a Turkish costume.

"An entire village population of women was marched around for a week, lined up and driven into a river bed, but the water was not deep enough to drown them and the poor wretches, those not murdered, were allowed to return home, and I know they later met the same death as their companions.

"Mothers were torn from their families and little children were seized, and their brains dashed out by these soldier guards. But for the fact that I was recognized as an American, both my children and I would have met the same fate. We met a Turkish officer while on the way from Armenia to Constantinople in 1913. When my troubles had become most acute I chanced to meet him again, and he confirmed my story, so that I received the protection of the Turkish Mayor of the village. Eventually I was permitted to go to Harpoot, and there I remained with the American Consul until I was taken ill and became a patient in a Red Cross hospital. There I remained for three months, having suffered complete exhaustion from the harrowing experiences of nearly three years in a country where a Christian's life was of no value in the eyes of a Turk.

"While I was in the hospital the Turks on one night forced all the Armenian patients in the institution to leave the building, and would have slaughtered them by wholesale but for the interference of the American Consul.

"When I had regained my strength I was permitted to go to Constantinople, and there met with another great misfortune when my little boy was drowned, July 10, 1916. I was in Constantinople until Dec. 23 of the same year. Here Ambassador Elkus heard my story in all its details, names, and dates. He has it all written out for whatever use it may serve. Mr. Elkus gave me every courtesy, and as a Christmas present he gave me my passports and I arrived in Berlin Christmas Eve. I made my way to Ambassador James W. Gerard's quarters, and he later provided safe passage for me to Copenhagen, where I boarded the steamer for New York, arriving home the early part of February, 1917."

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