

# ARMENIAN TELLS OF DEATH PILGRIMAGE

**Writes to Sister in New York of Cruelties Suffered from the Turks.**

**FAMILY IS TORN FROM HIM**

**Children Taken Away and Wife Sold Into Slavery in Journey Across Desert.**

A tale of cruelty by the Turks to Armenians is told in a letter just received by a New York woman from her brother, who, with his family, was part of the great host that was driven from their homes. The refugee had his two children torn from him, and he saw his wife sold into slavery. He saw his countrymen beaten or stabbed to death, and hundreds left to die from hunger and sickness as they were being driven from place to place.

The letter was sent to THE TIMES by the sister, who has received word that her brother is back in his native town after five years of suffering and wandering.

"It was on a Tuesday morning in August, 1914," the letter says, "when our priest was called by the Turkish Government and was told that all Armenians of Ofion-Kara-Hissan should get ready within forty-eight hours to be deported.

"Long before the time given in which we were to make our preparations the Turkish gendarmes came. With whips, and by beating, they compelled us to leave everything and go to the railroad station. Here they gave us tickets to Konia only.

"We reached Konia in the night. A few days later Brother Hagop, with his family, were sent here. Upon seeing each other we resolved not to part until the end. But here, too, the head police soon began to put into practice the cruel and vicious plans of Vally Pasha of the said Province, and ordered the refugees, numbering about 5,000 to 6,000 families, deported.

#### Families Torn Apart.

"Those who were in their homes were made to come out; others who were caught in the market place were killed or imprisoned. Women were separated from their husbands, children from their mothers. We, too, were thus broken up, and I lost trace of the children and my wife; also of my brother and his family.

"We were set on the road again. This time the caravan was headed for Tarsus. Fortunately, the children and my wife happened to be in the same caravan that I was in, and we once more were together. While we were marching the Turkish soldiers, with drawn swords, suddenly made their way through the crowd, and, like beasts let loose in a flock of sheep, killed and wounded many. The rest still dragged on under the influence of the bloody swords until Ras-ul-Ain Desert was reached. This place was especially noted for the carrying on of their butchery, for all that were sent to these parts were sent there to die.

"In accordance with the instructions of the Government, upon reaching Ras-ul-Ain an order was issued by the General asking for about 100 recently arrived refugees to be sent to Der-el-Zor to help build up that place. We were to be in the chosen lot and were sent to that place. Here we were asked to build houses with our own money. We were glad to do this and set to work immediately.

"After five or six months the fear of deportation began to startle us again. Those who were out in the desert nearby were being sent to interior parts and put to death. Those here were dying by the hundreds daily, some of hunger and others of sickness. As the number of our caravan decreased the Government began to impose heavy tasks upon the living. Women were sent out to fetch wood from distant places for fuel to cook food for the soldiers, while the men loaded and unloaded cargo from the trains.

#### Women and Girls Sold.

"Those who slowed up under their heavy loads were beaten to death by the gendarmes, who walked behind them and applied the whip freely to right and left.

"One morning, when we got up, we saw we were surrounded by Tchetchens, who were hired by the Porte and instructed to kill the Armenians, to carry off their women and children, to sell them as slaves, and to do all sorts of vicious deeds. We were ordered out of our houses and again were put on the road.

"Often on the way we pleaded for mercy. The Tchetchens refused to listen and said they must carry out the orders of the Government, and that they were to be paid for so doing. They told us they would do no killing, but would leave that to the Arabs. So we found ourselves once more out on the desert, making our way through the hot sands of Arabia, bare-headed and bare-footed. Agavani, who is now about 16, and Venanoosh, about 14, could not stand the heat. They fainted and fell in my arms. Even the grown-ups could not stand these long marches.

"Those who fell behind instantly were killed by the Arabs, who carried stone-headed clubs and hit the refugees on the head as they passed by on their horses. All that day we marched. That night the Tchetchens made us take off all our clothing, leaving nothing to us, not even our underwear. Then they picked out some of the men and shot them before us. They came again, and this time they chose some of the women and girls and sold them among themselves.

"The second day my children were taken away and their mother sold before my own eyes. After their work was completed they again pushed us onward. Having marched for twelve days under the hot, blazing sun, the attacks were renewed. The Turks, having consulted with the Kurd leaders regarding the extermination of all that was left of our company, came upon us like a herd of animals with daggers in their hands. They ruthlessly cut many into pieces. Many from our town were killed.

#### Lived by Eating Grass.

"I kept on walking with the few who were left, eating grass most of the way. Finally we reached Jeserche, the destined point of the deported Armenians. Those who survived to this place were put to death here. The air was filled with a disagreeable odor and the ground was covered with bodies.

"While we were yet on the outskirts of Jeserche we saw a band of Turkish soldiers in the distance who were out for a walk. They must have reported our presence to their commandant, who came with them in the night and took us with them. He also gave us shirts. We implored the commander to accept us as his slaves and let us do his work. He kept a few of us, I among them. He sent the rest to Musul, where they were to be put to death. I remained here for some time, but the fear of death never left me. I used to be imprisoned and sometimes put to severe torture. Thank God, I am now at Aleppo, far from the hands of the Turks."

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