

15 THE AMERICAN MISSION AT VAN: NARRATIVE PRINTED PRIVATELY IN THE UNITED STATES BY MISS GRACE HIGLEY KNAPP (1915).

*The first part of this narrative, down to and including the subsection headed "Deliverance," has been transcribed almost word for word by Miss Knapp from a Utter she wrote at Van, on the 24th May, 1915, to Dr. Barton, and has, therefore, all the value of contemporary evidence.*

*The period of the (first) Russian occupation of Van is also covered by two further letters from Miss Knapp to Dr. Barton—a long one written piece-meal on the 14th, 20th and 22nd June, and a second dated 26th July. These contain much more detail than the three corresponding sub-sections of her narrative, but the detail is principally devoted to personal matters and to the care of the Moslem refugees. As neither subject was strictly relevant to the purpose of the present collection, it seemed better to reprint the narrative rather than the letters in the case of these sections also.*

*There is also a Utter (published in the EUventh Report of the Women's Armenian Relief Fund) from Miss Louie Bond to Mrs. Orpin, written on the 27th July, almost the eve of the evacuation; but this, too, is practically entirely devoted to personal matters.*

*For the period of the retreat there are no contemporary Utters, but only an undated memorandum by Miss Knapp, which agrees word for word with the Utter part of her present narrative, from the beginning of the section headed "Flight" to the end.*

THE SETTING OF THE DRAMA AND THE ACTORS THEREIN.

Van was one of the most beautiful cities of Asiatic Turkey—a city of gardens and vineyards, situated on Lake Van in the centre of a plateau bordered by magnificent mountains. The walled city, containing the shops and most of the public buildings, was dominated by Castle Rock, a huge rock rising sheer from the plain, crowned with ancient battlements and fortifications, and bearing on its lakeward face famous cuneiform inscriptions. The Gardens, so-called because nearly every house had its garden or vineyard, extended over four miles eastward from the walled city and were about two miles in width.

The inhabitants numbered fifty thousand, three-fifths of whom were Armenians, two-fifths Turks. The Armenians were progressive and ambitious, and because of their numerical strength and the proximity of Russia the revolutionary party grew to be a force to be reckoned with. Three of its noted leaders were Vremyan, member of the Ottoman

{PAMPHLET: Grace Higley Knapp, *The Mission at Van: in Turkey in War Time* (with a chapter by Clarence D. Ussher, M.D., on the Future of the Missions at Van), privately printed, 1916. A slight variant of this report appears in the *EUventh Report of the "Women's Armenian Relief Fund,"* November 1913 to February 1916, pp. 3-18. Also see *Boston Evening Transcript* (28 July 1915), p. 22. —A.S.1 {For James Barton's copy of this report with a cover letter from Grace Knapp, see HL/ABC/15.9.7/25c/143. —A.S.)

Parliament; Ishkhan, the one most skilled in military tactics; and Aram, of whom there will be much to say later. The Governor often consulted with these men and seemed to be on the most friendly terms with them.

The American Mission Compound was on the south-eastern border of the middle third of the Gardens, on a slight rise of ground that made its buildings somewhat conspicuous. These buildings were a church building, two large new school buildings, two small ones, a lace school, a hospital, dispensary and four missionary residences. South-east, and quite near, was a broad plain. Here was the largest Turkish barracks of the large garrison, between which and the American premises nothing intervened. North and nearer, but with streets and houses between, was another large barracks, and farther north, within rifle range, was Toprak-Kala Hill, surmounted by a small barracks dubbed by the Americans the "Pepper Box." Five minutes' walk to the east of us was the German Orphanage managed by Herr Sporri, his wife and daughter (of Swiss extraction) and three single ladies.

The American force in 1914-1915 consisted of the veteran missionary, Mrs. G. C. Raynolds (Dr. Raynolds had been in America a year and a half collecting funds for our Van college, and had been prevented from returning by the outbreak of war); Dr. Clarence D. Ussher, in charge of the hospital and medical work; Mrs. Ussher, in charge of a philanthropic lace industry; Mr. and Mrs. Ernest A. Yarrow, in charge of the Boys' School and general work; Miss Gertrude Rogers, principal of the Girls' School; Miss Caroline Silliman, in charge of the primary department, and two Armenian and one Turkish kindergarten; Miss Elizabeth Ussher, in charge of the musical department; Miss Louise Bond, the English superintendent of the hospital; and Miss Grisel McLaren, our touring missionary. Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow had each four children; I was a visitor from Bitlis.

#### BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA.

During the mobilization of the fall and winter the Armenians had been ruthlessly plundered under the name of requisitioning; rich men were ruined and the poor stripped. Armenian soldiers in the Turkish army were neglected, half starved, set to digging trenches and doing the menial work; but, worst of all, they were deprived of their arms and thus left at the mercy of their fanatical, age-long enemies, their Moslem fellow-soldiers. Small wonder that those who could find a loophole of escape or could pay for exemption from military duty did so; many of those who could do neither simply would not give themselves up. We felt that a day of reckoning would soon come—a collision between these opposing forces or a holy war. But the revolutionists conducted themselves with remarkable restraint and prudence; controlled their hot-headed youth; patrolled the streets to prevent skirmishes; and bade the villagers endure in silence—better a village or two burned unavenged than that any attempt at reprisals should furnish an excuse for massacre.

For some time after Djevdet Bey, a brother-in-law of Enver Pasha, minister of war, became Governor General of Van Vilayet, he was absent from the city fighting at the border. When he returned in the early spring, everyone felt there would soon be something doing." There was. He demanded from the Armenians 3,000 soldiers. So

anxious were they to keep the peace that they promised to accede to this demand. But at this juncture trouble broke out between Armenians and Turks in the Shadakh region, and Djevdet Bey requested Ishkhan to go there as peace commissioner, accompanied by three other notable revolutionists. On their way there he had all four treacherously murdered. This was Friday, the 16th April. He then summoned Vremyan to him under the pretence of consulting with this leader, arrested him and sent him off to Constantinople.

The revolutionists now felt that they could not trust Djevdet Bey, the Vali, in any way and that therefore they could not give him the 3,000 men. They told him they would give 400 and pay by degrees the exemption tax for the rest. He would not accept the compromise. The Armenians begged Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow to see Djevdet Bey and try to mollify him. The Vali was obdurate. He "must be obeyed." He would put down this "rebellion" at all costs. He would first punish Shadakh, then attend to Van, but if the rebels fired one shot meanwhile he would put to death every man, woman and child of the Christians.

The fact cannot be too strongly emphasized that there was no "rebellion. As already pointed out, the revolutionists meant to keep the peace if it lay in their power to do so. But for some time past a line of Turkish entrenchments had been secretly drawn round the Armenian quarter of the Gardens. The revolutionists, determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible, prepared a defensive line of entrenchments.

Djevdet Bey said he wished to send a guard of fifty soldiers to the American premises. This guard must be accepted or a written statement given him by the Americans to the effect that it had been offered and refused, so that he should be absolved from all responsibility for our safety. He wished for an immediate answer, but at last consented to wait till Sunday noon.

Our Armenian friends, most of them, agreed that the guard must be accepted. But the revolutionists declared that such a force in so central a location menaced the safety of the Armenian forces and that they would never permit it to reach our premises alive. We might have a guard of five. But Djevdet Bey would give us fifty or none. Truly we were between the devil and the deep sea, for, if both revolutionists and Vali kept their word, we should be the occasion for the outbreak of trouble, if the guard were sent; if it were not sent, we should have no official assurance of safety for the thousands who were already preparing to take refuge on our premises. We should be blamed for an unhappy outcome either way. On Monday, when Dr. Ussher saw the Vali again, he seemed to be wavering and asked if he should send the guard. Dr. Ussher left the decision with him, but added that the sending of such a force might precipitate trouble. It was never sent.

Meanwhile Djevdet Bey had asked Miss McLaren and Schwester Martha, who had been nursing in the Turkish military hospital all winter, to continue their work there, and they had consented.

#### WAR! "ISHIM YOK, KEIFIM TCHOK."

On Tuesday, the 20th April, at 6 a.m., some Turkish soldiers tried to seize one of a band of village women on their way to the city. She fled. Two Armenian soldiers came up and asked the Turks what they were doing. The Turkish soldiers fired on the Armenians.

killing them. Thereupon the Turkish entrenchments opened fire. The siege had begun. There was a steady rifle firing all day, and from the walled city, now cut off from communication with the Gardens, was heard a continuous cannonading from Castle Rock upon the houses below. In the evening, houses were seen burning in every direction.

All the Armenians in the Gardens—nearly 30,000, as the Armenian population of the walled city is small—were now gathered into a district about a mile square, protected by eighty "teerks" (manned and barricaded houses) besides walls and trenches. The Armenian force consisted of 1,500 trained riflemen possessing only about 300 rifles. Their supply of ammunition was not great, so they were very sparing of it; used pistols only, when they could, and employed all sorts of devices to draw the fire of the enemy and waste their ammunition. They began to make bullets and cartridges, turning out 2,000 a day; also gunpowder, and after awhile they made three mortars for throwing bombs. The supply of material for the manufacture of these things was limited, and methods and implements were crude and primitive, but they were very happy and hopeful and exultant over their ability to keep the enemy at bay. Some of the rules for their men were: Keep clean; do not drink; tell the truth; do not curse the religion of the enemy. They sent a manifesto to the Turks to the effect that their quarrel was with one man and not with their Turkish neighbours. Valis might come and go, but the two races must continue to live together, and they hoped that after Djevdet went there might be peaceful and friendly relations between them. The Turks answered in the same spirit, saying that they were forced to fight. Indeed, a protest against this war was signed by many prominent Turks, but Djevdet would pay no attention to it.

The Armenians took and burned (the inmates, however, escaping) the barracks north of our premises, but apart from this they did not attempt the offensive to any extent—their numbers were too few. They were fighting for their homes, their very lives, and our sympathies could not but be wholly on their side, though we strove to keep our actions neutral. We allowed no armed men to enter the premises, and their leader, Aram, in order to help us to preserve the neutrality of our premises, forbade the bringing of wounded soldiers to our hospital, though Dr. Ussher treated them at their own temporary hospital. But Djevdet Bey wrote to Dr. Ussher on the 23rd that armed men had been seen entering our premises and that the rebels had prepared entrenchments near us. If, at the time of attack, one shot were fired from these entrenchments, he would be "regretfully compelled" to turn his cannon upon our premises and completely destroy them. We might know this for a surety. We answered that we were preserving the neutrality of our premises by every means in our power. By no law could we be held responsible for the actions of individuals or organisations outside our premises.

Our correspondence with the Vali was carried on through our official representative, Signor Sbordone, the Italian consular agent, and our postman was an old woman bearing a flag of truce. On her second journey she fell into a ditch and, rising without her white flag, was instantly shot dead by Turkish soldiers. Another was found, but she was wounded while sitting at the door of her shack on our premises. Then Aram said that he would permit no further correspondence until the Vali should answer a letter of

Sbordone's, in which the latter had told Djevdet that he had no right to expect the Armenians to surrender now, since the campaign had taken on the character of a massacre.

Djevdet would permit no communication with Miss McLaren at the Turkish hospital, and would answer no question of ours concerning her welfare, though after two weeks he wrote to Herr Sporri that she and Schwester Martha were well and comfortable. Dr. Ussher had known the Vali as a boy and had always been on the most friendly terms with him, but in a letter to the Austrian banker who had taken refuge on the German premises, the Vali wrote that one of his officers had taken some Russian prisoners and cannon and that he would cause them to parade in front of "His Majesty Dr. Ussher's fortifications, so that he, who with the rebels was always awaiting the Russians, should see them and be content." This letter ended with the words: "Ishim yok, keifim tchok ("I have no work and much fun.") While he was having no work and much fun, his soldiers and their wild allies, the Kurds, were sweeping the countryside, massacring men, women, and children and burning their homes. Babies were shot in their mothers' arms, small children were horribly mutilated, women were stripped and beaten. The villages were not prepared for attack; many made no resistance; others resisted until their ammunition gave out. On Sunday, the 25th, the first band of village refugees came to the city. At early dawn we heard them knocking, knocking, knocking at our gate. Dr. Ussher went out in dressing gown and slippers to hear their pitiful tale and send the wounded to the hospital, where he worked over them all day.

#### THE MISSION'S FIRST-AID TO THE INJURED.

Six thousand people from the Gardens had early removed to our premises with all their worldly possessions, filling church and school buildings and every room that could possibly be spared in the missionary residences. One woman said to Miss Silliman: "What would we do without this place? This is the third massacre during which I have taken refuge here." A large proportion of these people had to be fed, as they had been so poor that they had bought daily from the ovens what bread they had money for, and now that resource was cut off. Housing, sanitation, government, food, relation with the revolutionist forces, were problems that required great tact and executive ability. The Armenians were not able to cope with these problems unaided. They turned to the missionaries for help.

Mr. Yarrow has a splendid gift for organisation. He soon had everything in smoothly running order, with everyone hard at work at what he was best fitted to do. A regular city government for the whole city of thirty thousand inhabitants was organised with mayor, judges, and police—the town had never been so well policed before. Committees were formed to deal with every possible contingency. Grain was sold or contributed to the common fund by those who possessed it, most of whom manifested a generous and self-sacrificing spirit; one man gave all the wheat he possessed except a month's supply for his family. The use of a public oven was secured, bread tickets issued, a soup kitchen opened, and daily rations were given out to those on our premises and those outside who needed food. Miss Rogers and Miss Silliman secured a daily supply of milk, and made some of their school-girls boil it and distribute it to babies who needed it, until 190 were

being thus fed. The Boy Scouts, whom thirteen-year-old Neville Ussher had helped organize in the fall, now did yeoman's service in protecting the buildings against the dangers of fire, keeping the premises clean, carrying wounded on stretchers, reporting the sick, and, during the fourth week, distributing milk and eggs to babies and sick outside the premises.

Our hospital, which had a normal capacity of fifty beds, was made to accommodate one hundred and sixty-seven, beds being borrowed and placed on the floor in every available space. Such of the wounded as could walk or be brought to the hospital came regularly to have their wounds dressed. Many complicated operations were required to repair the mutilations inflicted by an unimaginable brutality and love of torture. Dr. Ussher, as the only physician and surgeon in the besieged city, had not only the care of the patients in his hospital, the treatment of the wounded refugees and of the wounded Armenian soldiers, but his dispensary and out-patients increased to an appalling number. Among the refugees exposure and privation brought in their train scores of cases of pneumonia and dysentery, and an epidemic of measles raged among the children. Miss Silliman took charge of a measles annex. Miss Rogers and Miss Ussher helped in the hospital, where Miss Bond and her Armenian nurses were worked to the limit of their strength, and after a while Mrs. Ussher, aided by Miss Rogers, opened an overflow hospital in an Armenian school-house, cleared of refugees for the purpose. Here it was a struggle to get beds, utensils, helpers, even food enough for the patients. Indeed all this extra medical and surgical work was hampered by insufficient medical and surgical supplies, for the annual shipment had been stalled at Alexandretta.

#### DARK DAYS.

At the end of two weeks the people in the walled city managed to send us word that they were holding their own and had taken some of the government buildings, though they were only a handful of fighters and were cannonaded day and night. About 16,000 cannon balls or shrapnel were fired upon them. The old-fashioned balls sunk into the three-foot thick walls of sun-dried brick without doing much harm. In time, of course, the walls would fall in, but they were the walls of upper stories. People took refuge in the lower stories, so only three persons lost their lives from this cause. Some of the "teerks" in the Gardens were also cannonaded without much damage being done. It seemed the enemy was reserving his heavier cannon and his shrapnel till the last. Three cannon balls fell on our premises the first week, one of them on a porch of the Usshers' house. Thirteen persons were wounded by bullets on the premises, one fatally. Our premises were so centrally located that the bullets of the Turks kept whizzing through, entered several rooms, broke the tiles on the roofs, and peppered the outside of the walls. We became so used to the pop-pop-pop of rifles and booming of cannon that we paid little attention to them in the daytime, but the fierce fusillades at night were rather nerve-racking.

A man escaping from Ardjish related the fate of that town, second in size and importance to Van in the vilayet. The kaimakam had called the men of all the guilds together on the 19th April, and, as he had always been friendly to the Armenians, they trusted him. When they had all gathered, he had them mown down by his soldiers.

Many of the village refugees had stopped short of the city at the little village of Shushantz, on a mountain side near the city. Here Aram bade them remain. On the 8th May we saw the place in flames, and Varak Monastery near by, with its priceless ancient manuscripts, also went up in smoke. These villagers now flocked into the city. Djevdet, seemed to have altered his tactics. He had women and children driven in by hundreds to help starve the city out. Owing to the mobilisation of the previous fall, the supply of wheat in the Gardens had been very much less than usual to begin with, and now that 10,000 refugees were being given a daily ration, though a ration barely sufficient to sustain life, this supply was rapidly approaching its limit. The ammunition was also giving out. Djevdet could bring in plenty of men and ammunition from other cities. Unless help came from Russia, it was impossible for the city to hold out much longer against him, and the hope of such help seemed very faint. We had no communication with the outside world; a telegram we had prepared to send to our embassy before the siege never left the city; the revolutionists were constantly sending out appeals for help to the Russo-Armenian volunteers on the border, but no word or sign of their reaching their destination was received by us. At the very last, when the Turks should come to close quarters, we knew that all the population of the besieged city would crowd into our premises as a last hope. But, enraged as Djevdet was by this unexpected and prolonged resistance, was it to be hoped that he could be persuaded to spare the lives of one of these men, women and children? We believed not. He might offer the Americans personal safety if we would leave the premises, but this, of course, we would not do; we would share the fate of our people. And it seemed not at all improbable that he would not even offer us safety, believing, as he seemed to believe, that we were aiding and upholding the "rebels."

Those were dark days indeed. Our little American circle came together two evenings in the week to discuss the problems constantly arising. We would joke and laugh over some aspects of our situation, but as we listened to the volley firing only two blocks away, we knew that at any hour the heroic but weakening defence might be overpowered; knew that then hell would be let loose in the crowded city and our crowded compound; knew that we should witness unspeakable atrocities perpetrated on the persons of those we loved, and probably suffer them in our own persons. And we would sing:

"Peace, perfect peace; the future all unknown!

Jesus we know and He is on the throne,"

and pray to the God who was able to deliver us out of the very mouth of the lion.

On Saturday forenoon a rift seemed to appear in the clouds, for many ships were seen on the lake, sailing away from Van, and we heard that they contained Turkish women and children. We became a "city all gone up to the housetops," wondering and surmising. Once before such a flight had taken place, when the Russians had advanced as far as Sarai. They had retreated, however, and the Turkish families had returned.

That afternoon the sky darkened again. Cannon at the Big Barracks on the plain began to fire in our direction. At first we could not believe that the shots were aimed at our flag, but no doubt was permitted us on that point. Seven shells fell on the premises, one on the roof of Miss Rogers' and Miss Silliman's house, making a big hole in it; two

others did the same thing on the boys-school and girls-school roofs. On Sunday morning the bombardment began again. Twenty-six shells fell on the premises before noon.

When the heavy firing began Dr. Ussher was visiting patients outside and Mrs. Ussher was also away from home at her overflow hospital, so I ran over from our own hospital to take their children to the safest part of the house, a narrow hall on the first floor. There we listened to the shrieking of the shrapnel and awaited the bursting of each shell. A deafening explosion shook the house. I ran up to my room to find it so full of dust and smoke that I could not see a foot before me. A shell had come through the three-foot-thick outside wall, burst, scattering its contained bullets, and its cap had passed through a partition wall into the next room and broken a door opposite. A shell entered a room in Mrs. Raynold's house, killing a little Armenian girl. Ten more shells fell in the afternoon. Djevdet was fulfilling his threat of bombarding our premises, and this proved to us that we could hope for no mercy at his hands when he should take the city.

#### DELIVERANCE.

In this darkest hour of all came deliverance. A lull followed the cannonading. Then at sunset a letter came from the occupants of the only Armenian house within the Turkish lines which had been spared (this because Djevdet had lived in it when a boy) which gave the information that the Turks had left the city. The barracks on the summit and at the foot of Toprak-Kala were found to contain so small a guard that it was easily overpowered, and these buildings were burned amidst the wildest excitement. So with all the Turkish "teerks," which were visited in turn. The Big Barracks was next seen to disgorge its garrison, a large company of horsemen who rode away over the hills, and that building, too, was burned after midnight. Large stores of wheat and ammunition were found. It all reminded one of the seventh chapter of II. Kings.

The whole city was awake, singing and rejoicing all night. In the morning its inhabitants could go whither they would unafraid. And now came the first check to our rejoicing. Miss McLaren was gone! She and Schwester Martha had been sent with the patients of the Turkish hospital four days before to Bitlis.

Mr. Yarrow went to the hospital. He found there twenty-five wounded soldiers too sick to travel, left there without food or water for five days. He found unburied dead. He stayed all day in the horrible place, that his presence might protect the terrified creatures until he could secure their removal to our hospital.

*The shelling of the mission buildings is as described by Mr. Yarrow; in an interview published in the New York Times, 6th October, 1915, the day after his arrival in America:—*

For twenty-seven days 1,500 determined Armenians held Van against 5,000 Turks and Kurds, and for the last three days they were shelled with shrapnel from a howitzer brought up by a Turkish company headed by a German officer. I myself saw him directing the fire of the gun.

Two days before the Russians came to Van, the Turks deliberately fired at the mission buildings. They stood out prominently and could not be mistaken, and also flew five American flags and one Red Cross flag as a protection. The firing was so accurate that the shots cut the signal halyards and brought the flags to the ground."

On Wednesday, the 19th May, the Russians and Russo-Armenian volunteers came into the city. It had been the knowledge of their approach that had caused the lurks to flee. Some hard fighting had to be done in the villages, however, before Djevdet and his reinforcements were driven out of the province. Troops poured into the city from Russia and Persia and passed on towards Bitlis.

Aram was made temporary governor of the province, and, for the first time for centuries, Armenians were given a chance to govern themselves. Business revived. People began to rebuild their burned houses and shops. We re-opened our mission schools, except the school in the walled city, the school-house there having been burned.

#### THE TABLES TURNED.

Not all the Turks had fled from the city. Some old men and women and children had stayed behind, many of them in hiding. The Armenian soldiers, unlike Turks, were not making war on such. There was only one place where the captives could be safe from the rabble, however. In their dilemma the Armenians turned, as usual, to the American missionaries. And so it came to pass that hardly had the six thousand Armenian refugees left our premises when the care of a thousand Turkish refugees was thrust upon us, some of them from villages the Russo-Armenian volunteers were "cleaning out.

It was with the greatest difficulty that food could be procured for these people. The city had an army to feed now. Wheat—the stores left by the Turks—was obtainable, but no flour, and the use of a mill was not available for some time. The missionaries had no help in a task so distasteful to the Armenians except that of two or three of the teachers of the school in the walled city, who now had no other work. Mr. Yarrow was obliged to drop most of his other duties and spend practically all his time working for our proteges. Mrs. Yarrow, Miss Rogers and Miss Silliman administered medicines and tried to give every one of the poor creatures a bath. Mrs. Ussher had bedding made, and secured and personally dispensed milk to the children and sick, spending several hours daily among them.

The wild Cossacks considered the Turkish women legitimate prey, and though the Russian General gave us a small guard, there was seldom a night during the first two or three weeks in which Dr. Ussher and Mr. Yarrow did not have to drive off marauders who had climbed over the walls of the compound and eluded the guard.

The effect on its followers of the religion of Islam was never more strongly contrasted with Christianity. While the Armenian refugees had been mutually helpful and self-sacrificing, these Moslems showed themselves absolutely selfish, callous and indifferent to each others suffering. Where the Armenians had been cheery and hopeful, and had clung to life with wonderful vitality, the Moslems, with no faith in God and no hope of a future life, bereft now of hope in this life, died like flies of the prevailing dysentery from lack of stamina and the will to live.

The situation became intolerable. The missionaries begged the Russian General to send these people out to villages, with a guard sufficient for safety and flocks to maintain them until they could begin to get their living from the soil. He was too much occupied with other matters to attend to us.

After six weeks of this, Countess Alexandra Tolstoi (daughter of the famous novelist) came to Van and took off our hands the care of our "guests," though they remained on our premises. She was a young woman, simple, sensible, and lovable. We gave her a surprise party on her birthday, carrying her the traditional cake with candles and crowning her with flowers, and she declared she had never had a birthday so delightfully celebrated in all her life. She worked hard for her charges. When her funds gave out and no more were forthcoming and her Russian helpers fell ill, she succeeded where we had failed and induced the General to send the Turks out into the country with provision for their safety and sustenance.

#### THE PESTILENCE THAT WALKETH IN DARKNESS.

Our Turkish refugees cost us a fearful price.

The last day of June Mrs. Ussher took her children, who had whooping cough, out of the pestilential atmosphere of the city to Artamid, the summer home on Lake Van, nine miles away. Dr. Ussher went there for the week-end, desperately in need of a little rest. On Saturday night they both became very ill. Upon hearing of this I went down to take care of them. On Monday Mr. and Mrs. Yarrow also fell ill. Ten days yet remained till the time set for closing the hospital for the summer, but Miss Bond set her nurses to the task of sending the patients away and went over to nurse the Yarrows. This left me without help for five days. Then, for four days more, two Armenian nurses cared for the sick ones at night and an untrained man nurse helped me during the daytime. Miss Rogers had come down on Thursday, the day after commencement for the cure of what she believed to be an attack of malaria. On Friday she too fell ill. Fortunately, there was at last a really good Russian physician in town, and he was most faithful in his attendance. The sickness proved to be typhus. Later we learned that at about the same time Miss Silliman, who had left for America on her furlough on the 15th June, accompanied by Neville Ussher, had been ill at Tiflis with what we now know was a mild form of the same disease. Dr. Ussher might have contracted it from his outside patients, but the others undoubtedly contracted it from the Turkish refugees.

Mrs. Yarrow was dangerously ill, but passed her crisis safely and first of all. Miss Bond then came to Artamid, though Mr. Yarrow was still very ill, feeling that the Usshers needed her more on account of their distance from the doctor. Miss Ussher took charge of the Yarrow children up in Van; Mrs. Raynolds managed the business affairs of the mission.

Mrs. Ussher had a very severe form of the disease, and her delicate frame, worn out with the overwork and terrible strain of the months past, could make no resistance. On the 14th July she entered into the life eternal.

We dared not let the sick ones suspect what had happened. Dr. Ussher was too ill at the time and for more than two weeks longer to be told of his terrible loss. For three months preceding his illness he had been the only physician in Van, and the strain of over-work and sleeplessness told severely now. After he had passed his typhus crisis, his life was in danger for a week longer from the pneumonia which had been a complication from the first. Then followed another not infrequent complication of typhus, an abscess in the parotid gland which caused long-continued weakness and suffering, at one time

threatened life and reason, and has had serious consequences which may prove permanent. Mr. Yarrow was so ill that his life was quite despaired of. It was by a veritable miracle that he was restored to us.

#### FLIGHT.

Meanwhile the Russian army had been slowly advancing westward. It had not been uniformly successful as we had expected it to be. Indeed, the Russians seemed to fight sluggishly and unenthusiastically. The Russo-Armenian volunteers, who were always sent ahead of the main army, did the heavy fighting. By the last week of July the Russians had not yet taken Bitlis, only ninety miles distant from Van. Suddenly the Turkish army began to advance towards Van, and the Russian army to retreat.

On Friday, the 30th July, General Nicolaieff ordered all the Armenians of the Van province, also the Americans and other foreigners, to flee for their lives. By Saturday night the city was nearly emptied of Armenians and quite emptied of conveyances. Nearly all our teachers, nurses, employees had left. It was every man for himself and no one to help us secure carriages or horses for our own flight. We at Artamid, with a sick man to provide for, would have had great difficulty in getting up to the city in time, had not Mrs. Yarrow risen from her sick-bed to go to the General and beg him to send us ambulances. These reached us after midnight.

There was little question in our minds as to our own flight. Our experience during the siege had shown us that the fact of our being Americans would not protect us from the Turks. Had not our two men, Mr. Yarrow and Dr. Ussher, been absolutely helpless we might have debated the matter. As it was, we women could not assume the responsibility of staying and keeping them there, and even if we had stayed we could have found no means to live in a deserted city.

We were fifteen Americans and had ten Armenian dependents—women and children—to provide for. The head nurse of the hospital, Garabed, plucky and loyal little fellow that he was, had sent on his mother and wife and had remained behind to help us get out of the country. Dr. Ussher's man-cook, having been with us at Artamid when the panic began, had been unable to secure conveyance for his sick wife. We greatly needed his help on the journey, but this involved our providing for a third sick person. We had three horses, an American grocer's delivery cart, really not strong enough for heavy work on rough and mountainous roads, and a small cart that would seat three. Our two other carts were not usable.

We begged the General to give us ambulances. He absolutely refused—he had none to spare. But, he added, he was to be replaced in a day or two by General Trokin; we could appeal to him when he came; the danger was not immediate. Somewhat reassured and not knowing how we could manage without help from the Russians, we made no effort to leave that day. But the next day, Monday, we heard that the volunteers who were trying to keep the road open to Russia would not be able to do so much longer—there was no time to lose. We set to work.

One of our teachers who had not succeeded in getting away before Monday morning, kindly took a small bag of clothing on his ox-cart for each of us. We spread the quilts and blankets we should need on the way on the bottom of the delivery cart, intending to lay

our three sick people on these. Garabed, who had never driven a team in his life, must drive two of our horses in this cart. Mrs. Raynolds would drive the third horse harnessed to the small cart, and take the babies and what food there was possibly room for; no provisions could be bought on the way. The rest of us must walk, though Mrs. Yarrow and Miss Rogers were newly risen from a sick bed and the children were all under twelve. We put loads on the cows we must take with us for the sake of the babies and the patients. But the cows were refractory; they kicked off the loads and ran wildly about the yard, tails up, heads down, whereupon the single horse broke loose and "also ran," smashing the small cart.

At this moment, the "psychological moment," two doctors of the Russian Red Cross rode into our yard. Seeing our plight they turned and rode out again. They returned a little later and on *their own responsibility* promised to take us with the Red Cross caravan. Thank the Lord!

We now put our loads on the delivery cart; put the wheels of the smashed cart on the body of a wheelless cart, and now that we might take a little more with us than food and bedding, packed in bags what we felt to be absolutely necessary. What we left behind we should never see again; we felt certain that the Russian soldiers before they left would loot our houses and perhaps burn them to forestall the Turks.

The Red Cross provided us with two ambulances with horses and drivers, and a stretcher carried between two horses for Dr. Ussher. He was usually taken into one of their sick tents when we camped at night; most of the rest of us slept on the ground in the open.

We left on Tuesday, the 3rd August. The Russians appeared to have received news that made them very uneasy, and, indeed, General Trokin himself left Van that very afternoon, as we learned later. The next day at sundown we heard the firing between the Kurds and the volunteers who were so gallantly trying to keep them at bay, to keep the road to Russia open as long as possible. It sounded startlingly near. We travelled till two a.m. that night in order to reach Bergri, where we should be, not safe, but beyond the line along which the Turks would try to intercept travellers. We were just in time. General Trokin's party, that had left Van only a few hours later than we, were unable to reach Bergri, and had to return and get out by the longer route through Persia. Had we with our slower rate of travel been obliged to do this, we might not have been able to get out at all.

#### THE ARROW THAT FLIETH BY DAY.

That afternoon—Thursday afternoon—we forded a wide and deep river, then entered a narrow valley, from the mountains commanding which Kurds suddenly began to fire down on the Red Cross caravan and the thousands of foot travellers. One man in an ambulance was killed, others wounded. The drivers of ambulances and litters whipped up their horses to a mad gallop. It was a race for life. The sight of those grasping, terror-stricken thousands was one never to be forgotten. The teacher who had taken our bags of clothing threw everything off his ox-cart in order to escape with his life. The Armenians on our long wagon threw off much of the luggage to lighten it, and thus we lost most of what we had brought with us.

Once out of the valley we were comparatively safe. We met a force of volunteers and Cossacks who entered the valley to engage with the Kurds. Mrs. Raynolds had been riding in the small cart. After the danger was over, while getting out of the cart, she fell and broke her leg below the knee. The Red Cross physicians set it at once, but she suffered greatly during the remainder of the journey over the rough roads, though lying at full length in one of our ambulances. She was quite helpless. Mr. Yarrow lay, too, in his ambulance, which he was unable to leave day or night during the journey, except when he was carried into a Red Cross tent on Sunday.

On Friday all but the four helpless ones and the babies walked over Mt. Taparez. On Saturday we again climbed on foot a high mountain, from sundown till three o'clock the next morning. The caravan rested on Sunday at a Red Cross camp near the top of Tchingli Mt. at the foot of Mt. Ararat. Here Dr. Ussher had two severe operations on his face without anaesthetics. On Monday at sunset we reached Igdir. Dr. Ussher was taken to a military hospital for officers, and the military sent him on to Tiflis on Thursday. We could not secure carriages until Wednesday morning to take us to the railway station at Etchmiadzin. We arrived in Tiflis the next morning.

#### SAFE!—BUT SORROWING.

Most of us had lost nearly everything but the clothes we stood in, and these we had worn day and night during the ten day's journey. Small wonder that the first hotel we went to had "no rooms." Mr. Smith, the American Consul, was most kind and did everything he could for us. He secured a room in a private hospital for Mrs. Raynolds and a bed in the city hospital for Dr. Ussher.

Dr. Ussher was again brought to death's door by very severe dysentery contracted on the road. He had become a nervous and physical wreck and in appearance the ghost of himself.

Dysentery was epidemic among the scores of thousands of refugees from Van Province who had crowded into Transcaucasia. The very air seemed poisoned; our children were all ill, and it seemed to us that they would not get well until we could leave Tiflis.

Mrs. Raynolds' broken bone refused to knit. She seemed also to be suffering from a collapse of her whole system. She would lie there patient, indifferent to what was going on about her, sunk in memories of the past, perhaps—who can say?

On the 24th August we were astounded at receiving a telegram from Dr. Raynolds. We had not heard of his leaving America and here he was at Petrograd! It seems he had started for Van as soon as he had heard of the Russian occupation, in company with Mr. Henry White, who was to teach in our college. At Petrograd he learned from the ambassador that the Van missionaries were in Tiflis, but of the reason therefor he had heard not a word, nor had he heard of his wife's condition,

Mrs. Raynolds brightened for a moment when told that her husband was on the way to her. Then the things of earth seemed to slip away from her; she might not tarry even for the dear one's coming. On Friday, the 27th August, her tired spirit found rest. Two days later Dr. Raynolds arrived to find wife gone, house gone, the work of his lifetime seemingly in ruins, the people he had loved exiles and destitute.

On Tuesday Mrs. Raynolds was laid to rest in the German Lutheran cemetery, and around her were gathered many of those whom she had lived to serve.

Then Dr. Raynolds and Mr. White decided that there was nothing left for them to do but return with us to America, and we left that week for Petrograd. There the American managers of what corresponds to our Y.M.C.A. were exceedingly kind and helpful. The city was so full of refugees from Poland that we had to sleep on tables in the Association halls the first night, but succeeded in securing rooms the next day. The children recovered, and Dr. Usshers improvement in health from the time of our arrival in Petrograd was simply wonderful. Mr. Yarrow seemed now quite himself again, although in reality he had not fully regained his strength.

Travelling up by rail round the Gulf of Bothnia, we spent a few days in Stockholm and sailed from Christiania on the 24th September, on the Danish ship "Hellig Olav.

We had had absolutely no news from any station in Turkey since the middle of April, and from America only what information Dr. Raynolds had brought us. On our arrival in New York, on the 5th October, we heard of the massacre of the Armenians in Bitlis by Djevdet Bey as soon as he had reached there after having been driven from Van. We heard of Miss Ely's death there in July, and of my brother's death, on the 10th August, in Diyarbekir; we heard that Miss McLaren was ill with typhus in Bitlis, and later that she was well; we learned of the massacre of Armenians all over Turkey and of their deportation. The Van refugees have been fortunate by comparison in that they could flee. Money for their relief has been sent to Transcaucasia; a few of them have succeeded in securing passports and getting to America.

" See Doc. 23.