

DOUBTFUL RELIEF WORK IN TURKEY.
FUNDS FOR SUFFERERS OFTEN GO ASTRAY—
DIRECT DISTRIBUTION ADVISABLE.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: A cable dispatch from Constantinople appears in The Tribune of to-day announcing that a subscription has been opened to raise a fund for the relief of the sufferers of last week's earthquakes there. The dispatch states that the Sultan has headed the fund with a subscription of 1,500 Turkish pounds, and that M. Cambon, the French Ambassador, has presented £500 from French subscribers.

It is very doubtful whether the fund which is to be raised will ever offer any relief to the unfortunate sufferers. For it has become something of usual occurrence in Turkey to raise funds for the relief of the sufferers of a disastrous fire, a famine, or an earthquake, which afterward, instead of being distributed to the unfortunate sufferers, go astray and are used for other purposes according to the discretion of the Turkish officials who have charge of the funds. Cases of this nature are numerous. To illustrate to the American public what methods are employed by the Turkish Government in using such funds I shall relate an incident of recent occurrence.

On March 2, 1894, Malatia, a town of large population in Armenia, was shocked by earthquake. Several of the houses were ruined and the remaining structures were made unsafe for habitation. Many lives were lost. The populace fled to the adjacent fields and plains and encamped on the snow. I will not describe their suffering from the severe cold. Immediately subscriptions were opened and funds raised for the relief of the stricken people. The Armenian colony in America also hastened to send a sum. As usual the fund was headed by the Sultan, who subscribed £300. Let me add that the Sultan's subscribing a sum to such funds does not necessarily mean that that sum will actually be given from his purse. He often subscribes sums for charitable purposes and is praised to the sky by the servile Turkish press for his "fatherly compassion," but seldom is the money given, which fact the press does not mention afterward. Within a short space of time about 4,000 Turkish pounds was raised, which is equal to about \$17,300, and has a greater significance in Turkey than in this country. Not a cent was distributed to the distressed sufferers for fully a year. Finally, in March last, £1,000 were distributed, but in a most iniquitous manner. The Christians received nothing; it was distributed exclusively to the Mahometans, while the fund was raised chiefly by the subscriptions of the Armenians, and the number of Armenian sufferers exceeded that of the Mahometans. And what became of the remaining £3,000? It was appropriated for the construction of a new mosque for the Moslems, which received the name of the Sultan. This ended the matter, and none dared to raise a voice of protest, knowing well that life-imprisonment was the penalty for such an offence—that is, for protesting against an act of Government officials.

Indeed, the recent earthquakes in Constantinople and the neighboring cities must have brought thousands of men, women and children to utter destitution and misery, and made urgent need of assistance. It is pleasing to see that the French and British Ambassadors in Constantinople have been manifesting a readiness to aid the distressed people; but if they will intrust their money into the hands of the Turkish officials it is a matter of painful doubt whether the miserable sufferers will ever receive any fraction of it. The best way for the foreign Ambassadors to make their gifts reach the distressed people is to distribute the donations directly by their own agents. It is of no use to intrust their money to the Turkish Government, which has never learned to give, but ever to take.

It is to be hoped that the Americans also will not be less prompt in following the philanthropic example of the French, and with their innate generosity will extend a kind hand of assistance to their Oriental brethren, which assistance may reach its destination directly through the American Legation at Constantinople.

A. P. V.

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