IN THE HANDS OF THE TURKS.

AN AMERICAN WOMAN'S EXPERIENCES.

From "THE TIMES."

The writer of the following article is an American lady who has recently returned from Beirut, Syria, by way of Turkey, Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, and Germany.

At the end of the first year of the war we happened to be buying clothes in a native store for a poor student. There was no other choice, but the storekeeper said that in a few days he was expecting a great quantity. "From where?" we asked, knowing that nothing had come into the city for a long time. "From Aleppo," was the answer, which means anything from the North, arriving in the Aleppo train. Two of our companions had just arrived "from Aleppo," other words, from Armenia. If you had travelled, as they did, along roads where the naked dead bodies made the fields on both sides white—if you had seen soldiers strip dying men before killing them—you would doubt where these clothes came from?

Here are a few facts about the Armenian massacres which we know to be correct. From one of the mission schools 157 boys between six and 16 were taken away by a body of 30 soldiers "for deportation to a village at some days' distance." Only three of them arrived at that village. Near Kharput is a beautiful deep mountain lake, where foreigners used to spend their summer holidays. Ten thousand Armenians were taken there by Turkish soldiers. Not one of them returned. In one of the villages on the Upper Euphrates a large bale was thrown on the bank one evening. It was found to contain the dead bodies of 35 babies.

SLAVE SALES IN STREET.

In Beirut, Armenian girls and women were sold in the streets for any price between 1s. and 5s. In three different places which we visited were camps of women and children, where mothers had to take off their clothes to protect their babies from the burning sun, and where any Moslem man could go in and select a child or woman and take them with him, dragging them along by the hair.

None of us will ever forget that December evening when suddenly the news came to our home in Beirut, "They are after the English!" Those were the exact words of the message brought to us, and their dread sound still lingers in our ears. No one doubted who "they" were, and we all knew of what "they" were capable.

We also knew that everywhere in Europe civilian belligerents had been interned, but there is a great difference between being sent to any kind of prison or concentration camp in either England or Germany and being given over to the mercies of the Turkish authorities. We Americans all felt that we must do our very utmost to prevent our friends from being taken to the interior. We knew that, once away from the coast, all contact with them would soon be made impossible. Torture and massacre stood out clearly in our imagination.

PATHETIC CROWD.

We were out of the house in a minute. All over the city we took the message to our English friends: "Come over at once to the Campus of the American College; we shall put you up in the buildings there, and we shall stand by you to the end." Two hours later they were all gathered in our walled compound—a pathetic crowd. Most of them had come over just as they were, without even bringing night clothes with them. We tried to provide them with what they needed. We tried to comfort and encourage nervous women and cheer gloomy-looking men. But we were nervous ourselves, and dreaded the coming day.

The order had been (so our informant had told us) to take them all during the night and send them off inland by the morning train. What would the Turkish authorities do when they found their prey had gone? Would they mob the compound or attack it with soldiers? Would they starve us out until we gave our friends up? Should we have to share their fate?

Early next morning reports began to come in. The Chief of Police had been furious when he found out that we had been ahead of him, and swore all sorts of oaths that he would get the better of us. Instructions came from the Consulate-General. The college President, Dr. H. Bliss, a man of great personal influence and a born diplomatist, had spent the greater part of the night between the Consulate and the Serays, the Turkish Government building, and came home much discouraged.

HARD BLOW TO PRIDE.

But things turned out differently from what we had expected. The Government sent word that those of the belligerents who were not back in their homes that day before noon would be looked upon as fugitives and dealt with very severely. Those who returned would enjoy all the consideration to which civilians had a right in time of war. The United States Consul-General, though humanly in full sympathy with our action, warned us against the unlawfulness of refusing to give up belligerents and resisting the authorities if they should wish to enter our premises. The fact that we did not trust the Turkish Government in no way altered its rights.

It was a hard blow for American national pride. It seemed almost impossible to have to tell one's friends to leave one's own safe home and submit to the great pleasure of their tyrants. I know that at that moment several of us felt as if we would rather have gone ourselves than send off those who had put their trust in us. But they went; and that day nothing more happened.

Next morning word was sent round by the Turkish Government that all male British subjects should keep themselves ready to leave the coast cities within two days. All through these two days the United States Consul-General, all influential Americans, and the institutions with which several of these British were connected, tried their utmost to get this decision changed or at least postponed. In vain.

BRITISH MALES TAKEN AWAY.

Two days later the male British subjects all left, early in the morning. There were business men, teachers, engineers, ministers, doctors, a very mixed crowd, but all kept up their spirits splendidly. A few women had come to the train for a last farewell. To the surprise and almost indignation of the natives, they did not indulge in any lamentations to show their devotion and the departure of their men. Those who had come not kept up as bravely as the men themselves.

The next few days were hard, but in less than a week word came from the prisoners themselves that they were in Damascus, and apparently would stay there. They were free to live wherever they liked—at their own expense. They had chosen hotels according to their means. They had to report daily to the police, but otherwise had the liberty of the city. Except that life was monotonous and the absence from their families trying, there were no complaints.

Later they were sent from Damascus to Urfah, a city of the interior in one of the Armenian districts. We know that many of them had typhus, and some of them died. We do now that since we left Turkey two months ago they were scattered in little groups of two and three over different villages and towns of Asia Minor, and that is about all.