

THE ZORYAN INSTITUTE

AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR RELIEF IN THE NEAR EAST

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

From S.E. Kerr
To All the family
Subject Nothing much

Marash, Turkey.

Apr. 4, 1920

It's just seven P.M. Easter Sunday, and it has certainly been a fine day, even if not like an Easter in Darby. All the churches having been burned except three (which are now tenement houses), we had no church service, but will have a "sing" tonight. Also preachers are very scarce here. The Armenians celebrate Easter as "Egg Sunday." As a result I found an egg under my pillow, & whole nests of them on the table this morning, painted all colors of the rainbow. War doesn't interfere with holidays here. Also you probably remember I had a birthday last week. Somehow, somebody here at the hospital where I live found out when it came and I must say I never realized what a great event it is till this last celebration. First came at 7 A.M. a serenade outside my bedroom door, followed by the entrance of a couple of beautiful gifts all rolled up in flowers - the hospital workers had apparently clubbed & spent their hard earned piastres to buy a fine piece of Marash needlework for me - a table center of "ketter" cloth with drawn work by the best Armenian needleworkers in the city. The day had only begun, for we had a great dinner - just imagine pistachio nut ice cream with chocolate sauce, & a cake with a big S in the icing, violets growing out of the icing. The cook is responsible for all this. They made the cream by



getting snow from the caves in the mountain. Vigilante's was never like this. In the evening I had to operate a little organ so all the Armenian workers here could have a "sing." So it was quite a big day.

9 P.M. The two Turkish doctors who work here in the hospital came in to call this evening, so I invited them to supper, & then found there was a Turkish woman whom I must also invite as she would otherwise eat alone, so we just finished our meal, five of us - the Turkish woman, Dr. Ali Dunn Bey (a Circassian) & Dr. Hilmi Bey (a Turk), & Miss Junin, the German matron of the hospital, who has lived in Marash as a missionary for ten years & can talk Turkish like a "Marashli". I like Ali Dunn very much. He seems to be a good doctor, too, & is very courteous to all the nurses & workers. We have in this hospital 47 patients now, 45 of them Turks, 1 French-Algerian, & 1 French soldier, a prisoner of the Turks. Ali Dunn gives this last soldier such fair treatment that the other patients don't like it.

I don't like living in a hospital much as there is noise so early in the morning, but the Armenian women working here are scared to stay here with all the T's unless an American man is here, too. We have three hospitals now, one for Turkish wounded, one for Armenian & French sick & wounded, & a contagious hospital for Armenians. This being the first of the month I have had to make out reports for March, & just discovered how big a job we have. During March 3500 Liras gold, (\$17,500) was spent for food for the Armenians in the city, not counting our orphanages. The industrial work has been enlarged greatly, so that several hundred



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people have work weaving, spinning, making shoes, etc.

There is not a great deal of "fresh" news. As usual, rumors are many, & the latest is that war is on at Aintab. Perhaps it is not true. An aeroplane sailed over the edge of Marash at a high altitude yesterday & went away again towards Aintab.

Mr. Lyman returned yesterday from Zeitoun. If you have been reading anything about Armenia you probably have heard of Zeitoun, which is famous for the brave Armenian men & women. The Turkish government here is anxious that there be no war between Armenians & Turks in Zeitoun, so asked Mr. Lyman and a leading Armenian preacher here to go with a Turkish representative to ask the Zeitoun people to give up all their arms and ammunition. Mr. Lyman agreed to go, but did not forget that in 1915 a German missionary had done a similar thing and advised the Zeitouners to be obedient to the government. As a result the Zeitoun men had given up their rifles & immediately the whole Armenian population of 40,000 was deported. Of these, 4,000 are alive today.

So when Mr. Lyman reached Zeitoun, a two days ride on horse over the mountain, he found that all the Armenians of the town and surrounding villages were living in a big barracks on the top of a steep mountain, a regular castle & were fortified there. The Turks naturally didn't care for the job of taking the rifles from the Armenians under these circumstances, & had asked Lyman to do the dirty work.



2/ Lyman made some inquiries & found that before the trouble had begun in Marash the Armenians in the villages surrounding Zeiton had been massacred. There was no doubt that the Turkish gendarmes of Zeiton had gone to the villages and stirred up the Turks there to kill the Armenian villagers. One man who told Lyman these things & gave a story which means much. He was the only Armenian in his village who possessed a gun - a double barreled shot gun. One day a Turkish friend of his came & said, "Come outside the village with me." They walked away together, & when out of the village the Turk said, "Leave your gun here." The Armenian said "Then you must also leave yours." The Turk refused, but insisted that the Armenian lay his down. When the latter said "no" to this the Turk jerked his rifle up & fired, but missed. You can rest assured the next shot came from the Armenian & if he didn't give the Turk both barrels he would have. Anyhow he lived to tell Mr. Lyman that the Turk missed him, & then he stopped his story, & merely said he didn't return to the village but came to Zeiton. The next day a small boy from the same place also came to Zeiton & said he was the only one of the seventy Armenians there who had escaped. All others were massacred.

Lyman thought if the Zeiton Armenians gave up their rifles what could they expect. — just what the story above shows. As soon as they give up their guns the Turks will slaughter them. So when the men in the barracks on the mountain said they would die with their rifles rather than without them Lyman was not surprised. He returned to Marash & reported to the Mutasarrif, who said, "You have not accomplished your mission if they have not given up their arms." Lyman's answer was that the Zeiton men had no reason to trust any promises of the Turkish government, judging from past history, & that they were perfectly right in keeping their guns for self protection, rather than placing their lives under the "protection" of the government.



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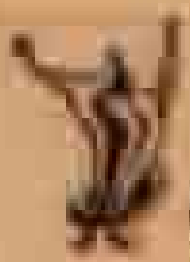
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The Mutisereef & Djemil Bey (the military commander here) were not especially pleased to hear this, & said "There is no other way - The Zeitoners must give up their guns."

Today it is said a Turkish cannon started on its way to Zeiton. Lyman & the Armenian who was with him are much rather pessimistic about the outlook for Zeiton Armenians.

Here in Marash everything is quiet & conditions much better, except that Armenians have practically no work. The Turks are working Armenian farms, selling Armenian stolen goods, milking Armenian cows, etc. What is needed here is a government to right a few wrongs. The Turks even brag about the number of Armenians they killed & how they did it. "They say openly that they had agreed on it beforehand. One man told one of our employees "You are a friend of mine, but if you had come to my house during the fight I would have had to kill you, for we all swore on the Koran to kill all Christians we could."

Even our American property wasn't respected. The Refuge home was burned & looted, the mountain cottage



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was burned, & our two farm houses were looted & all the stock taken. We even know which Turk has our cows & donkeys, & we know who killed our best orphanage teacher, for he brags about having cut his throat & all his family except two sons.

I've heard some horrible stories & know they are true.

There is no telling when my letters will get off to America. I still have here letters I wrote home a month ago. I'll enclose photos when there is a chance to mail the letters without their having to go via Turk post.

Must close & go to bed. Hope you have all had a fine Easter Day, & that everybody at home is well & happy. I am well, & in no danger, so don't worry at all about me. Will be glad when another letter comes from Darby even if it is 3 months old.

An Armenian woman brought me a cap knitted from Angora wool and said I must take it to America for my mother, so Mother you have at least one souvenir of Turkey coming.

I won't be leaving Turkey before July 15, so you can keep on writing for a while yet.

Lots of love to all at home,

from

Stanley