

Marash, Turkey.
January 20, 1920.

Dear Mother,

They say that Christmas comes but once a year, but in this queer country Christmas comes twice a year and Sunday three times a week. The Armenians celebrate Christmas on Jan. 19, the Moslems' Sabbath comes on Friday, and the Jews close their stores on Saturday and hike for the Synagogue. So on Sunday night when somebody remarked that it was Christmas eve again we decided to celebrate. Doc Wilson called a consultation of all the "hired girls" and the ~~xxx~~ Armenian cook and asked them what Armenians liked to eat. The big idea was to have a grand outdoor feed for all the Armenian refugees in the city who had fled from villages near Marash and were camping in the Churches in the city. So while Snyder and I "printed" two hundred tickets, the others arranged the menu, which I'll give at meal time. Early the next morning Sam, the Armenian servant, woke me. (Sam wears a pair of real baggy trousers he made out of a blanket.) He handed me my trousers and we finally extracted the necessary spondulix which the A.C.R.E.F. ~~xxx~~ was to furnish for the feed. Samuel took the donkey and came back half an hour later with a donkey load of enormous pumpkins. Meanwhile Dr. Wilson was hiking around the town giving out tickets to the refugees, Dr. Crathern the Y man was planning for some games, and he and I procured four enormous copper kettles from two of the orphanages. These were placed in a row on stones, fires kindled and water soon began to heat up,

Samuel now appeared with half a dead cow, 250 oranges and ten strings of figs, a kettle of fat, a bag of ekshi, and a sack of boughour ^{See} which is a preparation of wheat made by parboiling wheat kernels, then cracking up the kernels. Some of the "guests" appeared soon and set to work preparing the dinner. Some of the women peeled the pumpkins and cut them up, while others cut up the meat and tended to the fires. We had almost forgotten the question of dishes, but that was quickly solved by a raid on the pile of empty tin cans, which we prepared by pounding the tops smooth and by a good washing.

By noon time the Armenian women had the big kettles boiling hard. The meat was stewed in the largest for a while, then the chopped pumpkin and ekshi (an herb) added, together with salt. This was to be one dish. In the other kettles the women poured the broken wheat grains or "boughour" after they had cleaned and sifted it. This swells greatly on boiling and soon there were big copper pans four feet in diameter piled high with steaming wheat; on this was poured the melted fat. The finished product is almost the same as boiled rice mixed with fat.

Our yard by this time was full of Armenians, all of them the most ragged looking lot of people of all Marash. This was the coldest day so far this winter, and yet very few of these people had shoes and many not even stockings. They sat around the fires getting up an appetite and seemed to be having a good time however. We brought out a pair of boxing gloves the YMCA man had with him and tried to get the boys to box but for a while they wouldn't go near them. Then Dr. Crathern persuaded an Armenian boy to box, and the boy went to it and knocked the Doctor's hat off. After this scrap some of the younger boys had a few great fights. They all use their arms like hammers and never punch.

Finally dinner was ready, and after getting the crowd lined up properly, they filed past the bread pile, got a loaf of bread about the size and shape of a five cent ~~Frankfurter~~ pie, then a tin can full of the beef and squash stew, and another can of the boughour. They had no spoon or forks, but they all had fingers. Some of the people had no tin cans,

so we piled the food in big pans, and then six or eight people would sit on the ground around the pan, so all you could see was a circle of backs. If you looked over the top the scene was a pile of grub with about ten hands shoveling in. Everybody squatted on the ground, and the scene around the yard was surely comical--about two hundred and seventy-five people dressed in gorgeous colored rags eating with their fingers out of tin cans. They were just as happy as if it was a turkey dinner in a big dining room. They all came back for second helpings, and even then so much was left over that they all were able to carry home a can full, along with their oranges and figs. You should have seen the tumors some of the people had. Some had big swellings in their shirts or belts, due to a can of stew or boughour stowed away for the next day.

The feast was followed by a demonstration of a hand plow, by Mr. Snyder. In the spring a plow is to be given to each village, so the farmers were all interested, as they had never seen anything but the old style "crooked stick" sort of a plow. We had thought it would be fun to get a bag of old shoes and throw them from a window and let the people scramble for them, but a moment was enough to show that this was nothing to play with. Even tho the shoes were not mated and were absolutely not worth sending from America, those people actually fought for them. They all need them so badly it was no joke with them, so we stopped this method of distribution at once. Several groups of boys were rolling around on the ground scrapping for an old shoe for some time. They all took it goodnaturedly and when the crowd got ready to leave they gave three big cheers for the Americans and voted it a good dinner. We had all had as good a time as the refugees, too. I took a number of photos with the A.C.S.R. N.E. Graflex, and will not send this letter till I have developed them.

Snyder planned to go to Aintab this morning, and he and Dr. Crathern got off about seven thirty. Reports came in last night that a wagon train bringing of the French on its way from here to Aintab was attacked by Turks near the Ak Su, all the guard killed and the wagons looted. If this is true the road won't be very safe for autos. Snyder however thinks there is no danger. He took with him the Y.M.C.A. man, (Dr. Crathern, a Congregation minister from Boston) a French lieutenant on his way to France, his orderly, one of our nurses, an Armenian merchant and one of our couriers, who is carrying our mail. I gave him a letter for home, written on Jan. 18. The mails are so uncertain now that I don't know whether my letters reach the US or not. The last letter I had from home was written No. 9th, but there is probably more in Aleppo or Aintab for me, and Snyder may bring them tonight if he has no trouble on the way.

My index finger is pretty well worn down now from pounding this machine so I will quit. Hope everybody at home is well and happy. Wish you could all come over here for a while and go back home with me. Love to all the family, from

Stanley.

P.S. Since the mails are so uncertain, I will send two copies where ever I can, one by Turkish post and the other any other way available. So if you get two letters alike or perhaps only a carbon copy, you will know why.