



THE ZORYAN INSTITUTE

ALBPO. SYRIA
AUGUST FOURTH NINETEEN HINSTEEN

Dear Folks

Leave it to the two Penn men in the organization to find the easy way to do everything, even writing letters. We have decided that it is a waste of time to write the same things to so many different people, so we have done what other bright people, ahem! sometimes do, formed a syndicate and gone into the business of letter writing on a wholesale plan. So if this lacks some of the personal flavor, it will be better than no letter at all, at least this is our hope? So here goes. Stanley Kerr on the dictating end, and John Dunaway at the machine.

To start in with we are the two most pronounced and incurable photo bugs in the organization. At some meeting or other one good careful Scotch we man inquired how the younger and more frivolous members of the party ever managed to spend twenty five dollars a month, which you will perhaps recall is the salary we receive. Well at the time I told her that I am investing in Real Estate (J.D. is saying this) but as a matter of fact we have spent more money and time taking pictures than in any other way? And of course this country is the picture taker's paradise. On every hand something out of the ordinary, something that a year ago we would have thought impossible, presents itself to view. The A C R N E has a Graflex camera in the outfit, and Kerr is the official custodian of it, while Dunaway's standby is a post card size kodak. If you do not receive a lot of pictures in this letter you are not being treated right. There would be more if photo print paper were not so hard to get. Sometimes it can not be secured for love or money, and it always takes a lot of money. And more than half the time it is no good after it is procured.

We are going to take for granted that you know how we got down here to Aleppo. But to recapitulate, as the orators would say, we crossed to France on the Leviathan, from Brest to Marseilles on the American Hospital train, from Brest to Constantinople on the British Hospital ship, the Gloucester Castle, of the famous Castle line of steamers that formerly plied between England and South Africa. It does not seem fair to dispose of such a trip in so few words for parts of it were wonderful, and all of it unusual to those of us who had never been out of sight of land in all our lives. The Leviathan, formerly the Fatherland is the biggest ship afloat? Otherwise we can not hand it much. It was raining in Brest, and was very muddy, so we knew we had reached France. We saw odles of American soldiers, all anxious to get home, and all wanting to know how things were back in old Pa. or Ill. or Missouri as the case might be. And all were amazed that any group of people could be so far gone in the head as to leave the United States unless they had to. France had that well manicured look that we had expected. We saw little or no evidence of the war except quantities of soldiers. Every French officer old enough to sprout a beard had a Croix de Guerre. Some of our crowd bought them for a dollar each for souvenirs. The ship stopped at Saloniki for three days. It is far the the most picturesque town that we have seen. All the costumes of the world are there as well as all the different peoples of the world. Not so very long ago the town had been more than half destroyed by fire and yet it has twice as many people in it today as ever before. The bugs and vermin had not been destroyed, only concentrated. There was a British General on board, that was most agreeable. If you are up on the war as you should be, you will remember Gen Hugh Gough, at one time the most talked of and admired man in the whole war. But we are sure that all the criticism of him was



not merited. But we will leave his defense to others. He was very handy to have along for in Saloniki he secured a couple of fine autos and took a party out to Seres, sixty miles or so away, on the Bulgarian frontier. We passed the famous Strumar valley where for four years and more the Greeks and Bulgarians, with a little help from the other nations, pounded one another and took and retook the valley. Seres was three times bombarded, captured and recaptured, and today is a sorry specimen indeed. One of the first persons to spy us was an American Red Cross man, and I am very sorry that I can not remember his name. Constantinople was disappointing. It is too large for description in anything less than a book, and for such a description look in Mark Twain's Innocents Abroad. It was written forty years or so ago, but it is still as true to life as when it was written. The only word that fits the case at all is dirt, spelled so with capitals DIRT. But at a distance it looks a good deal like a city, surely plenty of people. But it seems to take a long time to get to Aleppo.

The warehouses of the A C R H E were located forty five miles away from Constantinople at Derindje, on the Gulf of Issid. There were a good many interesting things connected with the place. In the harbor were some rather interesting ships, the old Goeben, which had had such an eventful career, and which was still flying the Turkish flag. There were some captured German submarines which we went through, and swiped a few things just to keep our hand in. One of these boats had accounted for eighty allied ships during the war. Then there was a Russian battleship which the British had possession of. There was not a removable object left on board. We know for we tried all afternoon to find something which could be pried loose, but to no purpose. It seemed to us that we stayed in Derindje a long time. The cargo of supplies was in an awful mess, and it took a long time to straighten it out. Lack of foresight and lack of head work on the part of the management. Imagine eighteen thousand tons of goods in boxes and bales all piled in indiscriminately on twelve floors of these immense warehouses, and what would happen if you wanted a certain box containing say surgical instruments and you not only did not know how the box looked on the outside, but you had no idea under the sun where the box was at!

But the units finally got away, slowly, but too fast really for the conditions that were met with in the interior. Life was never very orderly here in the East, and at the present time no one knows where he is at, in government and authority, except that where the British Army is there is some semblance of order and security. Weddo not mean to intimate that there were any wars going on, but every thing seemed paralyzed and slow in a way that had not dreamed about. The Turks were still very much in evidence around Derindje and Constant. They seemed meek enough, but a surprising number were armed. We never strolled far away without carrying cannons of one sort or another but there was no trouble. The only thing that needs be said about the people in that part of the world that does not seem true down here is that down here they carry loads on the backs of donkeys and camels, and around Const. men are the beasts of burden and carry enormous loads on their backs.

Travelling in Turkey has its disadvantages. Every once in a while we would stop on a siding all night while half the train would be pulled to the top of a hill. Once we stopped out in the midst of a never ending plain while the engine went to the next town for water. Fuel is very scarce, and the engines all seem to have the asthma or some other wheeze of the lungs. The road beds are well made and in good repair. The first thing noticed is that the ties are of iron. We travelled in style and some comfort though in spite of all the difficulties. There were five persons to each box car. (Cars about half as big as in America, but each packed, "eight horses or forty men") We put up our beds and were at home for the eight days of the journey. There was a cook car where we had good American grub, almost ruined and always beyond recognition after passing through the hands of the native cooks. The tunnels through the Taurus mountains are the most extensive system in the whole world, so we are told, and the canyons and other things that go with mountains make a most beautiful piece of scenery. These tunnels were completed during the war by the Germans, largely with the help of British prisoners of war, whose graves dot the hillside and give evidence of the way they were treated. Some of the Syrian party went on to Beirut, and stayed there. J.D. went on to Beirut but came back the next week because the work there is not heavy and the personnel large in comparison with this field.

Like most of the color of this stationary does not give you the "willies."
In this queer country it is loud in color, and yet here no color



Sound or smell is ever considered loud or even unusual. If you could just drop in here from America this morning you would think you were in the land of Alladin. Men wear skirts with baggy trousers underneath, though they sometime leave off the skirts. Always there is the bright sash, some of them very expensive, and all sorts of interesting headgears from the ever present red fez to the brilliant silk kafirs with tassels and the enormous camel hair rope that keeps it on the head. If any of the men in our party were to appear on the street with an American girl's kimono, a bed room cap, pink satin slippers, he would not be noticed or create comment on the street. Just dress up in civilized American clothes and walk through the bazar and every shop keeper takes you for a victim and thinks he is going to sell some silks or rugs at five times their real value. The shop keepers however do not find the Americans such easy marks as they once thought, and some of our party really get the better of the natives when it comes to bargaining. Bargaining is a fine art here. The first price you are safe in assuming is three times the one really expected for the article. It is great fun to Jew and Arab down to one third of his first price, but even then he gets much the better of the bargain. Of course we all speak Arabic and Turkish to say nothing of Armenian fluently. Maloon, queiskotere, finish are the three words one hears the most, the latter the English vocabulary of almost every native.

But there isn't much time for bazaaring here in Turkey these days. Just listen to what is being done here in Aleppo, and remember that relief work is so well organized here in Aleppo that one doesn't notice much distress, while in other parts of the country there is a great deal of suffering from disease, lack of food and clothes and no work. Conditions are extremely bad in northern Armenia and the Caucasus, from the reports we hear.

Aleppo is a sort of clearing station for returning refugees. It is on the edge of the desert, and nearly all the deported Armenians passed thru here on their way to exile. The few who return come here first for relief - then gradually return to their former homes, in ruins now. So here in Aleppo our organization runs an enormous military barrack formerly the Turkish Barracks. Here over 6000 refugees are housed, given blankets and rations and a job. The children are put in a school, and the women either knitt or go out for work. We have here a 150 150 bed hospital. ~~It~~ Here is where Kerr hangs out his shingle - "Laboratory" - and terrorizes the patients with a big needle, with which he bleeds them to look for the elusive malaria bug.

Dunaway amuses himself wrecking Arab harems, and as a result is probably the most popular (?) American among the natives. He has to hang a small cannon over one shoulder to keep the crowd back when he goes girl hunting. It really is a shame the way he breaks up happy family life. Once in a while Kerr shows a little compassion on his fellow alumnus and helps in the dirty work. Last week ~~we~~ had a great time and one day rescued 25 Armenians/ girls from Turkish and Arab harems. When the Armenians were deported the Arabs raided the caravans and stole the women girls and often the babies. The man had for the most part been killed before they got the Arabs. Some took these poor people out of pity. We had such an interesting trip that we can not help but tell you all about it.

First of all a little preamble. These girl hunts are not like our wild bear hunt near Bardizak, where the best policy is to still hunt in the moon light, if it does not rain. Girl hunting is a science. Some one tells where he thinks the girl is. Authority is then secured from the British and Arab governments, and off we go with a light Red truck, with interpreters, gendarmes, and all of us well armed.

We left Aleppo at five A.M. for the town of Bab, about thirty miles away, thirty miles of desert, passed long caravans of donkeys and camels, through two Arab villages of cone shaped mud houses, looking for all the world like enormous bee farms. Bab itself is a little more modern, and has in addition to the cone shaped houses, some square flat roofed mud houses, generally white washed a brilliant white, if white could be so spoken of. The Arab Governor was not yet out of bed when we arrived at the Serai. But we had been there before for women and girls, and had caused so much excitement that he was not long in appearing on the scene. We had taken in all thirty six girls from this village before this. This time our method was a little different. John D. asked the governor to produce the men who had girls in their homes. After a short pow wow the gov. so sent out the gendarmes with instructions to have all known holders of female real estate to appear at two p.m. Since there was no need to waste all morning waiting so off we went on a scouting trip to the small Arab tribes in the desert surrounding Bab. The Gov.

went along for the ride, but turned out to be very useful, since the Arab sheiks were all subject to him, and as a result our party received every courtesy and attention possible. As we came close to the first of the small villages the inhabitants naturally surrounded us to see their first automobile. We had the name of one girl in this village. The governor sent for the Mukda of the village, and demanded that she be produced. Her owner was sent for. He begged for time, but we said nothing doing, but got busy at once. Our private cop went for her while the Mukda served coffee and had his first photo taken. We left with such suddenness that one of the gendarmes left us head over heels, but fortunately was not hurt. There was no road, merely a camel path across the hills and valleys and amongst the stones and scrub grass. The next step was at the tribal house of the head of a small tribe, where we received the kind of hospitality that you only read about in the United States, but which the Arabs can do to perfection. The best of everything was ours. First of all the old chief led us into the tribal house where we sat on the floor on soft cushions and rugs, while the Arabs outside prepared coffee, brought us hand made cigarettes. After a time the interpreter explained our errand, and to be sure our own importance and authority did not suffer any in his explanation. His argument was so convincing that without any protest the girls were sent for, and soon five had been collected. The old chief explained that he would be forever ashamed if we left his village with out first eating with him. We compromised by taking him with us to the next village, of which he was also one of the head men, where the same ritual was gone through as before, and three women secured. In the second village we had the usual coffee and conversation. Here one of the Arab men hid a girl in a well, but one of the little boys gave it away on him, and she was brought along with the rest. While Dunaway was in taking part in the conversation, coffee, etc, Kerr was taking in the village, followed by the usual crowd of natives. He was led behind the house, and given a seat of honor on a camel saddle, while some native dances were pulled off for his benefit. One old man played near music on a near flute, while the rest kept time by clapping their hands on their knees, while two young men with long curls did a unique sword dance, introducing some fancy steps and fencing poses. Another group of men later did the regular eastern muscle dance, described so eloquently by the barker in the circus, "she dances not with their feet alone, but with her whole body!" After taking some pictures, we went back to the other village and had a regular feast, done up in the regular Arabian Delmonico style. A sheep had been killed especially for us, and the native women it prepared it out doors over a fire of camel dung. We sat on the floor in the tribal house, while the whole village gathered to see us eat. The men sat around the wall and smoked their nargalis, while the old chief himself did us the honor to wait on the table to see that it was done correctly and that no soup was spilled down our backs. Of course in these villages there are no such things as bacteria. So there is the common drinking cup for the coffee and the one bowl for the sour milk. The first course, one bowl of sour milk, passed around the ring, beginning with the governor. Next course, Arab coffee, one table spoonful of the bitterest concoction in the world, not even excluding Child's restaurants. Next a cloth was spread on the floor, around which we gathered, an enormous platter three feet across and heaped two feet high with wheat boiled and prepared like rice only better to the taste, and this pyramid covered with delicious hunks of broiled lamb. The Governor and the Americans were honored with immense wooden spoons, but the others ate catch as catch can. We all fell too, and of the crowd the jew chauffeur did the honors of the occasion with his truly remarkable influence over food. One feature of the affair was the old chief's attention to the governor, whose appetite was poor due perhaps to the auto ride. The old man would pick out the choicest morsels of lamb and pitch them across the ring to the governor who of course had to make good even though he was sick at his tummy. The chauffeur was also patted on the back in appreciation of his work in the gastronomic line. There was also four bowls of tomato stew, which Kerr and Dunaway were fortunate enough to share one. The last course cucumbers, pared to order while we waited, and we wound it all up by washing our hands, though we thought the Moslems washed before they ate. After we were through the Armenian girls were served, and the natives had what was left. On returning to Bab we found the gendarmes had quite generally fallen down on the job so Dunaway stayed to hasten action while Kerr took the car and went after more girls in the surrounding villages. One girl was dragged from behind a door, and five children were taken amidst the tears of the whole village. These children were brothers and



sisters, and apparently were loved by the whole village. Their story is worth repeating. The old chief of this tribe had somehow known these children and their parents when they lived in Aintab before the massacres. When they were deported the old Arab rescued the five children, but could not prevent the slaughter of the father and mother. He took the boys and two girls to his own house and treated them as his own children. The Turk who was governor of Bab at the time saw the girls and demanded them from the old chief. In protecting them the chief received four bullets in his thigh and abdomen. He showed Kerr the wounds, and said: "After I have protected these children for four years are you going to takethem away?" It does seem unfair to the old sheikh, but of course the best thing for the children was to take them and send them back to Aintab, where they owned land and houses. It was a heart-breaking task tearing the boys and girls away from their Arab home, and there was much wailing and tears. The whole village came to say goodbye, and even our hardboiled driver and the gendarme were affected. The old chief insisted on coming clear into Aleppo in our crowded car with his "children", and cried the whole way in.

Returning to Bab ~~with~~ with eight Armenian children Kerr found Dunaway ~~with~~ waiting with nine new additions, making a total haul of 25 for the day. The Red had a capacity of about 14, so half of our family was left in the police station for the night with the promise that the car would return the following day for them, and finally with a full load we headed home. All day there had been no sign of engine or tire trouble, but going home we had two punctures. The old chief at these occasions prayed to Allah while we changed tires. He sure was a peach and we all felt sorry for him. It was a beautiful night and the girls soon stopped crying over this new "deportation" and began to enjoy the ride immensely. Several of them were so young they could remember nothing of their former homes and didn't even know they were Armenians. These are the kind of orphans that will have to be cared for permanently. The others are sent on to their old homes as soon as it is certain they will be cared for there.

The car went for the rest of the girls the next day, and all were deposited finally in the A.C.R.N.E. Refuge home, where in one day they were as happy as they could be.

A great many Armenians are escaping from the Arab villages without assistance. A few days ago fifteen boys and three girls arrived in Aleppo on donkeys from Der-El-Zor near the Euphrates, too far away for us to touch. Kerr took their picture in desert costume at the barracks.

This blasted letter has taken all morning to be writ- using the Hunt and One-finger system, on an Underwood. Dinner is ready, so let's me stop for nourishment.

Maasaleymi.

We were going to discuss the political situation after dinner, but it is too hot so you are spared. Dunaway's temperature rose one degree while abusing his typewriter so Kerr put him to bed and now officially brings this lengthy epistle to an abrupt finish.

TAMAM.

S. Kerr