

THE SASSOUN MASSACRE

Proof of the Assertion that Armenian Revolutionists Caused It.

TESTIMONY OF REV. CYRUS HAMLIN

A Protest Against Americans Helping England to Realize Political Aspirations in the East.

To the Editor of The New-York Times:

In our previous letter we affirmed that the Sassoun troubles were brought about by the criminal efforts of Armenian revolutionary committees, and that no reliance whatever ought to be placed on Armenian testimony and assertions. We now propose to prove these two affirmations, not by Turkish—that is to say, Mussulman—testimony, but by American and European—namely, Christian testimony.

First—The man who, above all, gave the most explicit and true account of the Armenian revolutionary movement is the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin himself. On the 23d of December, 1893, or, in other words, only a few months before the revolt of Sassoun, he published in The Congregationalist a truly prophetic statement, the perusal of which is absolutely necessary for an impartial understanding of the case. Here is this statement:

"An Armenian 'revolutionary' party is causing great evil and suffering to the missionary work and to the whole Christian population of certain parts of the Turkish Empire. It is a secret organization, and is managed with a skill in deceit which is known only in the East. In a widely distributed pamphlet the following announcement is made at the close:

"This is the only Armenian party which is leading on the revolutionary movement in Armenia. Its centre is Athens, and it has branches in every village and city in Armenia, also in the colonies. Nishan Garabedian, one of the founders of the party, is in America, and those desiring to get further information may communicate with him, addressing Nishan Garabedian, 15 Fountain Street, Worcester, Mass., or with the centre, M. Beniard, Poste Restante, Athens, Greece."

"A very intelligent Armenian gentleman, who speaks fluently and correctly English as well as Armenian, and is an eloquent defender of the revolution, assured me that they have the strongest hopes of preparing the way for Russia's entrance into Asia Minor to take possession. In answer to the question as to how, he replied: 'These Hunchagui bands, organized all over the empire, will watch their opportunities to kill Turks and Kurds, set fire to their villages, and then make their escape into the mountains. The enraged Moslems will then rise and fall upon the defenseless Armenians, and slaughter them with such barbarities that Russia will enter, in the name of humanity and Christian civilization, and take possession.'

"When I denounced the scheme as atrocious and infernal beyond anything ever known, he calmly replied: 'It appears so to you, no doubt, but we Armenians are determined to be free. Europe listened to the Bulgarian horrors, and made Bulgaria free. She will listen to our cry when it goes up in the shrieks and blood of millions of women and children.' I urged in vain that this scheme would make the very name of Armenian hateful among all civilized people. He replied: 'We are desperate; we shall do it.'

"But your people do not want Russian protection. They prefer Turkey, bad as she is. There are hundreds of miles of contentious territory into which emigration is easy at all times. It has been so for all the centuries of Moslem rule. If your people preferred the Russian Government, there would not now be an Armenian family in Turkey."

"Yes," he replied, "and for such stupidity they will have to suffer."

"I have had conversations with others who avow the same things, but no one acknowledges that he is a member of the party. Falsehood is, of course, justifiable where murder and arson are."

"In Turkey the party aims to excite the Turks against Protestant missionaries and against Protestant Armenians. All the troubles at Marsovan originated in their movements. They are cunning, unprincipled, and cruel. They terrorize their own people by demanding contributions of money under threats of assassination—a threat which has often been put into execution."

"I have made the mildest possible disclosure of only a few of the abominations of this Hunchagui revolutionary party. It is of Russian origin; Russian gold and craft govern it. Let all missionaries, home and foreign, denounce it. Let all Protestant Armenians everywhere boldly denounce it. It is trying to enter every Sunday school and deceive and pervert the innocent and ignorant into supporters of this craft. We must, therefore, be careful that in befriending Armenians we do nothing that can be construed into an approval of this movement, which all should abhor. While yet we recognize the probability that some Armenians in this country, ignorant of the real object and cruel designs of the Hunchaguis, are led by their patriotism to join with them, and while we sympathize with the sufferings of the Armenians at home, we must stand aloof from any such desperate attempts, which contemplate the destruction of Protestant missions, churches, schools, and Bible work, involving all in a common ruin that is diligently and craftily sought. Let all home and foreign missionaries beware of any alliance with, or countenance of, the Hunchaguis."

We do not really know whether the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin is considered to be a prophet in his own country, but his prophetic faculties as far as the last Armenian revolt is concerned are not denied in Turkey. They are simply marvelous—for months before the occurrence of the Sassoun troubles the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin had exactly and minutely shown what they would be. And yet, after the fulfillment of his own prophecy, the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin was bold enough to say that the above statement was written by him only "to show the absurdity of the revolutionary plotters." The reverend gentleman must have a candid and innocent soul. Otherwise he would not have attempted to prove to fair-minded Americans that the "bloodthirstiness" of the Armenian revolutionary plotters is synonymous to their "absurdity." We suppose that the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin will also attribute to the "absurdity of revolutionary plotters" the following statement, showing his past guilty interference in Turkish affairs. One of these Armenian "plotters" made some time ago to The Boston Herald this extraordinary admission, which, for the honor of Robert College, if not for his own, the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin ought, if he can, to contradict:

"Several years ago," writes the Armenian, "I heard him lecture at Amherst, Mass. How proud he was to tell his audience the important part taken by the Bulgarian graduates of Robert College in securing the freedom and independence of their country! I ask the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin if he was not aware of the existence of patriotic societies among his Bulgarian students," &c

But in order to show that the Rev. Cyrus Hamlin's prophecy holds good, let American readers reflect on the following passage of a letter written by the special correspondent of the Associated Press, who visited Turkey after the Sassoun revolt, and who, although bitterly opposed to the Turkish Government, wrote as follows:

"It is a fact that certain of the Armenian conspirators arranged to murder the Rev. Edward Riggs and two other American missionaries at Marsovan and fasten the blame upon the Turks, in order that the United States might inflict summary punishment upon the Turkish Government, thereby making possible Armenian independence. One will search a long time in the pages of history for a more diabolical plot than that. Moreover, the missionaries would have been murdered had not an Armenian friend warned them. Dr. Riggs has unselfishly given his life to the education of Armenian youth in the missionary schools, and done more than any Armenian has ever tried to do toward making Armenians worthy of autonomous government. Yet the revolutionary conspirators apparently gave that fact little thought. * * * It is, of course, impossible to say to what extent radical ideas prevail among the revolutionary propagandists, but the plans of some of the leaders are shocking in the extreme."

In brief, their plans are to commit atrocities upon Turks, in order that the infuriated Turks shall shock the Christian world by the fiendish outrages of their retaliation. When remonstrated with in regard to these un-Christian plans, the men who are responsible for them merely say: 'It may seem to you cruel and barbarous, but we know what we are doing, and why we are doing it.'

"The financial methods of these men are almost as ingenious as their plans of politi-

cal agitation. Certain Armenians of a lower grade of mental ability are required to furnish so many thousand piastres to the committee, and the means of obtaining the money are plainly mapped out. Here is a case in point:

"A wealthy Turk in the service of the Government in Constantinople received a letter one morning, saying that unless he deposited 12,000 piastres in a certain place within twenty-four hours he would be killed. An investigation led to the discovery of the fact that the letter was written by an Armenian who had been in his employ as a trusted servant for several years. The servant confessed his guilt, but he asserted in self-defense that revolutionary agitators had compelled him to write the letter under penalty of death. It was a case of choice of evils, and the poor wretch saved his life at the expense of a long term of imprisonment. It is believed that a great deal of money is raised in this way, but whether or not this money gets beyond the pockets of the revolutionary agitators, no man pretends to know. There is a theory that this money is used in the purchase of rifles and ammunition, but that is a matter known only to the agitators themselves."

The reason why English public opinion is generally in favor of the Armenians is both political and religious. No real esteem for the Armenians themselves exists in England. Besides, everybody admits in Europe that Armenians are, as a race, much inferior to the Turks. Armenians, even in olden times, showed no greatness. Their influence in the world has been absolutely nil. In science, in art, in literature, in warlike achievements, they have left no trace. But, they are Christians; and this is one reason why English public opinion is in their favor. The political reason lies in the fact that England wishes to harass Turkey for the just opposition of the latter to English scandalous encroachments on Egyptian territory, which, after all, belongs legitimately to the Sultan. It is just as if England had taken possession of one of your States, and at the same time were fomenting discontent for, and disapprobation of, your treatment of the Indian race which Columbus found supreme on this continent.

Such being the real state of things, we consider that it is quite time for public opinion in the United States to see how erroneous and even anti-American is the policy which consists in helping England in her political aspirations in the East. American public opinion ought to remain aloof from European intrigues. It ought especially to learn to estimate correctly the value of Armenian assertions and of the Armenian moral standard.

"If," writes the Associated Press correspondent above quoted, "the detailed facts of the Sassoun massacre are ever established, it must be independently of Armenian testimony, or their value may be seriously questioned. In the first place, every Armenian with whom it has been my lot to come in contact, seems to have a very vague idea of the value of truth. In the second place, in his anxiety to make out a case against the Turk, he is willing to publish as fact, any grotesque rumor that he may chance to fall over in the street. In the third place, he does not really know what actually took place in the Sassoun mountains, but his vanity will not permit him to acknowledge it, and so, to be up with the times and to help along the cause of his people, he embellishes the rumor that he hears, and frequently says that he is in secret communication with friends in Moosh and Bitlis, who are harboring Sassoun refugees. He average Armenian cannot be believed on oath."

In this deplorable condition of Armenian honesty, we find a true explanation of the following remarkable incident, an account of which was given at the time, as follows, by all the newspapers:

"The story which has been thrilling the world for some time past of the wife of the Armenian leader Grego, who, rather than suffer dishonor at the hands of her Turkish persecutors, threw herself, with her child in her arms, into an abyss, and was followed by other women until the ravine was filled with corpses, has been exploded, as many persons predicted it would be, at the time it was sprung upon the public. It has been discovered that the horrible narrative is a reproduction, with additions and embellishments to suit the occasion, of an old tale told in poetry by Mrs. Hemans years ago, under the title of 'The Suliote Mother.'"

In the face of all the innumerable Armenian falsehoods of this kind, word has just reached us that Mr. Gladstone, in his Chester speech, asserted that the world is in possession of independent American testimony favorable to the Armenians. No greater error has ever been made. Mr. Gladstone ought to have known better. There is absolutely no American testimony regarding the Sassoun troubles. And the reason is very simple. No American was at the Sassoun district at the time of the revolt. The Rev. F. D. Greene, it is true, published a slanderous pamphlet on the "Armenian Crisis in Turkey," in which he printed a few documents supposed to be well authenticated. But as no American-born citizen saw anything of the Sassoun disturbances, it follows necessarily that said documents were written either by Armenians or by American missionaries, under the inspiration of Armenians. Therefore, the Rev. F. D. Greene's pamphlet is based upon Armenian falsehoods. This makes it utterly and completely valueless. Mr. Gladstone owes to us to show where and how he was able to find a single genuine American document favoring the Armenian allegations; that is to say, the allegations of a people who "cannot be believed on oath." Facts, however, have very seldom disturbed Mr. Gladstone's fanaticism. We trust that Americans having no political views on Turkey will see how dangerous it is to encourage, either by word or by moral help, Armenian revolutionists, for the simple reason that they are Christians. "Armenia," wrote some time ago the correspondent mentioned above, "is preparing for war. The revolutionary party has now both money and guns. During the past eight weeks money has poured into the revolutionary treasury in a steady stream from the Armenian colonies in Batoum, Tiflis, Baku, Erivan, Etchmiadzin, and other places in Russia, and from Rescht, Kazvin, Teheran, Tebriz, Khoi, and other cities in Persia. I have not visited the Armenian colonies on the north coast of the Black Sea, nor the large colony at Ispahan in Southern Persia, but I am reliably informed that revolutionary agents have been as busy there as elsewhere. I have myself seen a considerable sum of this money raised publicly, and I am told that the wealthy Armenian merchants in the cities I have named have made large private contributions, with promises of more for future use if needed. "The money raised publicly has been obtained by means of balls, social entertainments, theatrical performances, and lotteries. These functions were ostensibly for the 'benefit of the Sassoun refugees.' But it was a very thin disguise. It was thoroughly understood what the money was wanted for, and that the Sassoun refugees would not see a penny of it except in the shape of rifles and ammunition."

The cries, therefore, in favor of the Sassoun refugees and the famished are either based on Armenian falsehoods or uttered by those who have political aims to further and attain. Could Americans be deceived by such a very thin disguise? We doubt it.

Constantinople, Aug. 8.