

THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK OF ARCHAG, THE LITTLE ARMENIAN, BY CHARLES H.
SCHNAPPS

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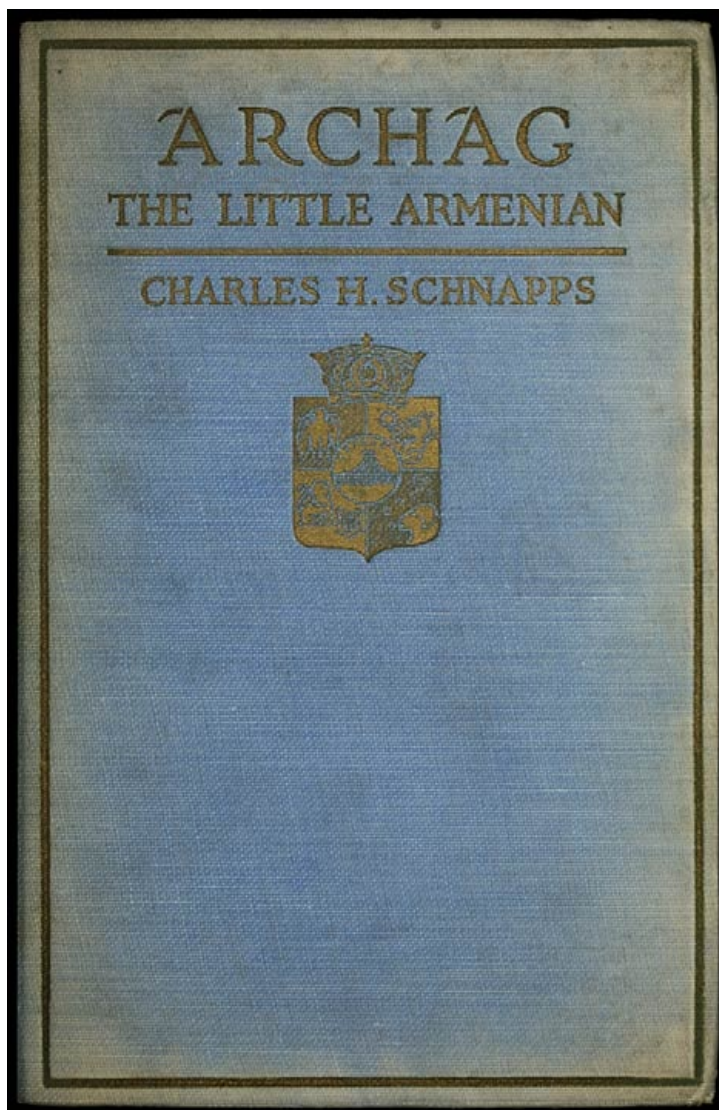
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ARMENIAN ***



ARCHAG
The
LITTLE ARMENIAN

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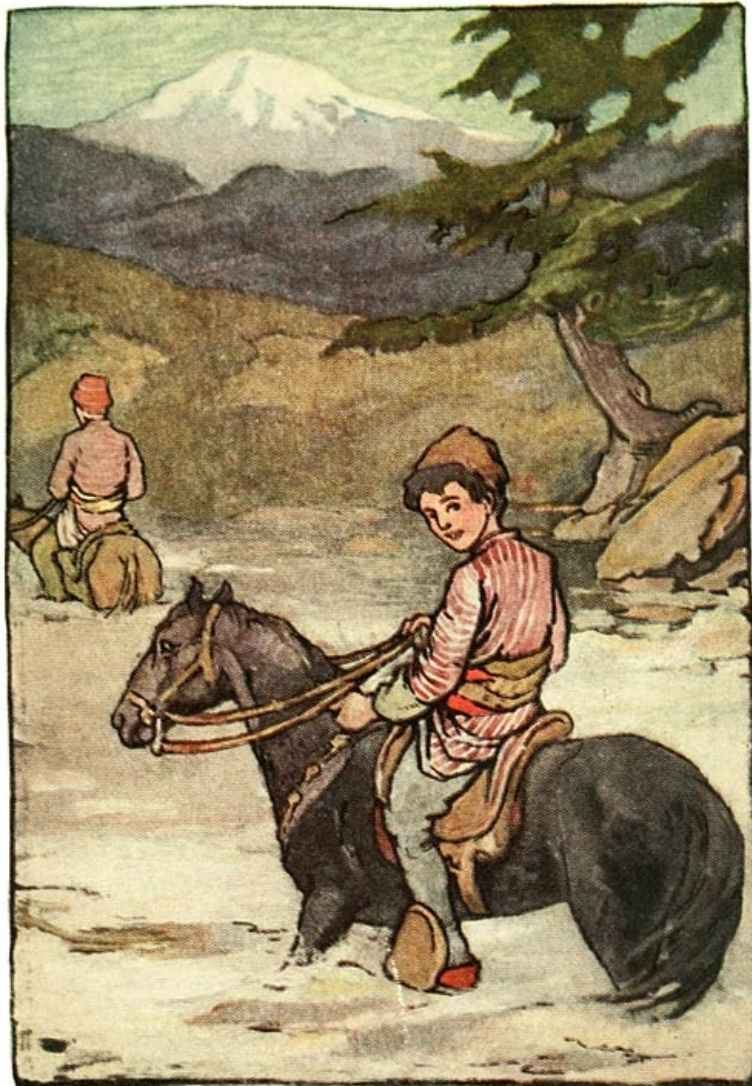
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Archag Rides Towards Mount Ararat

ARCHAG
The
LITTLE ARMENIAN

Translated from the French of
CHARLES H. SCHNAPPS

BY
MARGARET P. WATERMAN

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
681 FIFTH AVENUE

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The frontispiece is from a drawing in colors by Margaret Ely Webb.

The black and white drawings are by B. F. Williamson from photographs taken in Armenia by Charlotte F. Grant.

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A LETTER TO THE ONE WHO READS THIS BOOK

DEAR SCHOOLMATE:

This new story in our series is about a people whose name you heard often during the Great War; perhaps you even sent some of your own pennies across the ocean to help them; for no one, not gallant little Belgium itself, suffered more in the war than did the Armenians. We sometimes think of them as the Belgians of the East, for their resistance delayed the advance of Turkish battalions, just as Belgium's brave stand prevented the first onrush of the Germans; and the Turkish revenge has been more horrible than the German.

The bulletins of the Near East Relief Committee, which raised money for food and clothing and medicine and helpers in Western Asia, tell us how the Turks tried to annihilate the Armenians, and how, among the four million Armenians, Syrians, Jews, Greeks, and Persians who survived, four hundred thousand were orphans. In those first four months after the armistice, they were still dying every day, by hundreds, of starvation and disease, they were homeless and naked. Miss B. S. Papazian, an Armenian, has written a little book about her people, "The Tragedy of Armenia," in which she says: "The Armenians of Turkey to the number of about a million, old and young, rich and poor, and of both sexes, had been collectively drowned, burned, bayoneted, starved, bastinadoed, or otherwise tortured to death, or else deported on foot, penniless and without food, to the burning Arabian deserts." The whole story of their sufferings is too terrible for children to read; yet, American children are not willing to shut their eyes and ears to the sorrows of their brothers and sisters, whether in France or Belgium, or close at home in our American city slums, or far over seas in Asia Minor. I wonder how many boys and girls who read this letter, adopted a French orphan, or gave a little refugee a merry Christmas? And how many had a share in feeding and clothing and educating some little forlorn Armenian child?

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But this story of Archag, and his life at the missionary school, is not in our Schoolmate Series merely because Armenians are a persecuted people whom American children ought to love and to succor; it is here also because there are a good many Armenians in America, and more are coming, whose children will be American citizens in another twenty years. The Armenians, like our own Puritan forefathers, came here to escape religious persecution; so those of us who happen to be descended from the early settlers in New England ought to have a strong fellow-feeling for this other race of Christians who have suffered for the sake of their religion and have hoped to find religious freedom here with us.

The Armenian Church, for which Armenians suffer martyrdom in our enlightened twentieth century, is one of the most ancient of the Churches of Christendom. Its founder was St. Gregory, called the Illuminator, who received a heavenly vision and built a little chapel, in A. D. 303, on the spot on which the vision came to him. It was this Gregory who converted King Tiridates of Armenia to Christianity, and it was King Tiridates who proclaimed Christianity the State religion of Armenia, some years before the Emperor Constantine made it the state religion of Rome. The Armenian Church is a democratic church, for the clergy in the villages are appointed and paid by their own congregations, and often in poor places the priest and his wife work in the fields with the peasants. The Armenian's Church is the true home of his spirit. He has no country of his own, for the region which we think of as Armenia was, before the Great War, divided among three nations, Russia, Turkey, and Persia, and arbitrarily ruled by them. The Armenians were a subject people; but in their religion they were free, and they have endured torture and death for the sake of this dear freedom.

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According to one of their own writers, Aram Raffi, the name "Armenia" first appears in the fifth century before Christ, but the Armenians themselves have a name of their own, which they like. They call themselves "Hai," and their country "Hayastan," because they have a tradition that they are descended from "Haik," the son of Torgom, great-grandson of Japheth, Noah's son. If you will look at your map of Asia Minor, you will find that Mount Ararat, on which Noah's Ark rested after the flood went down, is at the meeting place of the three divisions of Armenia, the Russian division, the Persian, and the Turkish; and it is not strange that with this beautiful snow mountain soaring over their enslaved country, the Armenians should trace their ancestry back so directly to Noah.

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It was during the latter part of the last century that the Turkish Government set the Kurds on to massacre the Armenians. The massacres of 1895-96, the massacre at Van in 1908, and those at Adana and in Cilicia, in 1909, were all carried out by the consent of the Turkish authorities. And because of these persecutions the Armenians began to leave Asia Minor for America.

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The Kurds, who committed the atrocities under the instigation of the Turks, are a semi-nomad race, living part of the year in tents; a picturesque, wild, ungovernable people, practicing a sort of highway robbery as a trade, and a sort of Mohammedanism as a religion. The Armenians, on the other hand, are farmers and merchants, thrifty, intelligent, peaceful, eager for education, and, as you have read, devoted Christians. It is not strange that two peoples so different in habits and temperament should find it difficult to live together, as neighbors; and the Turks, who are jealous of the intelligence and industry and ability of the Armenians, and hate them also for their Christianity, have not scrupled to stir up the Kurds against them. What is still worse, they have compelled the Armenians to live unarmed among their armed and fierce Kurdish enemies. We sometimes hear the Armenians called cowardly, but if we had to live unarmed among a hostile race who carried good modern rifles, we, too, might be called cowards.

No; we need not think of Armenians simply as a down-trodden and feeble folk, who have run away helplessly from danger, and to whom Americans must be compassionate and charitable. They have something to give us, as well. Their diligence is a good gift; they work hard, and they are intelligent in their work. Their faithfulness to God is the best of gifts. And they have a great love of education. This gift, if there were no other, would win for them a place in the Schoolmate Series. In a book called "Travel and Politics in Armenia," by Noel and Harold Buxton, published in 1914, which you may like to read some day, we get a vivid idea of the love of the Armenians for their schools. The authors say:

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"There is a remarkable contrast between the villages of Armenians and the villages of Kurds. We had traveled for days in a Kurdish district, a waste of bare, sandy hills, with never a tree or any sign of cultivation. Our halting-place for lunch proved to be an Armenian village, and luscious melons were put before us, which the arid soil produces in abundance as soon as a little irrigation is applied to it. While we sat in the *Khan* (inn), the local schoolmaster appeared—a wonder still more remarkable than the melons, for whoever heard of a school in a Kurdish village? We seemed to be suddenly transported to a center of civilization. This educational activity is beyond all praise. Here was a man of some ability, prepared to live a lonely life in an isolated village, for the sake of his nation and the younger generation."

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They go on to tell us of the school system, which is voluntary and without Government aid. There is—or perhaps since the War, one should say was—a National Committee for Education which sat at Constantinople; the teachers were paid by the Committee, and there were School inspectors for each district, in Turkish Armenia. Pupils who could afford it paid for their schooling, but those who were poor were not kept out by their poverty. Does not this sound very modern, and American, and democratic? Surely, these are people who will make good Americans.

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And going to school in Armenia was an exciting adventure, before the War. Listen to the story which the Buxtons tell of a Secondary Boys' School founded more than fifty years ago at Varag, by an Armenian Bishop, a pioneer in modern education in Armenia:

"At the time of the massacres (1909) masters and boys had to fly to the mountains, and while they were absent, the buildings were completely destroyed by fire. Nevertheless, an entire reconstruction was undertaken. The Church, which happily was not destroyed, occupies one side of the courtyard and the new buildings occupy the other three; a second courtyard is now nearing completion (1914). A second attempt was made less than three years ago to despoil this institution. The attacking party, about a hundred strong, was repelled by five Armenian revolutionaries, aided no doubt by the 'young blood' of the college. Now (1914) there are seventy boys and seven teachers, all laymen. The system is

pre-eminently practical. The pupils are destined for teaching, and since it is considered part of a village schoolmaster's duty in Armenia to be able to assist peasants in agricultural matters, thorough instruction is given in fruit, vegetable, and poultry culture, dairy work, and general gardening. The school grounds form a delightful oasis of irrigated lands in the midst of surrounding desert. The school printing press was stolen by the Government and the compositor abducted; but a more modern machine has taken its place. Every boy takes his share, out of school hours, in carpentry and house-work. The court-yard forms a fine play-ground, and here, having mentioned Boy Scouts, I found myself surrounded by an ardent crowd, thirsting for scout lore, and begging to be enrolled at once as 'tenderfeet.'"

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What may have been the fate of this boys' school at Varag, since 1914, I dread to imagine. As it was a native school, there is no mention of it, so far as I know, in the reports of American Missionary Schools. We can only hope that some of those seventy boys and their seven masters still live, and will one day take heart to build up the old school again.

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Besides the native schools, there are the schools and colleges established in Asia Minor by American Missionaries, and to these also the Armenians flock. The author of "Archag" has laid some of the scenes of his story in one of these famous missionary schools, the Central Turkey College at Aintab, and has given us a lively picture of the ardent young Armenians at their games and their studies. Ever since "Tom Brown at Rugby," school stories have been the fashion, and it is reassuring to see how curiously akin schoolboys are, all the world over, whether they be English lads at Rugby, or Oriental youngsters at Aintab. Beneath their fezzes and zoubouns, our Armenian hero and his friends are genuine boys at heart, with a boy's sense of honor and love of good sport. The picture of the school, too, is one for Americans to be proud of, with its devoted teachers, its high intellectual standards, and its Christian atmosphere. And its record during the War has been very fine. In the Report of the American Board of Missions, 1918, I read that the four missionaries who were able to stay there "have all been carrying a heavy burden for, unlike many of our stations to the north which were practically depopulated, Aintab has had an ever-increasing number of refugees to care for. At times the attitude of the local officials was distinctly hostile and the danger of further massacre was great, but the opportune arrival of a British force on December 15, 1918, saved the day and already there are signs of recovery. Christian services are being attended by great crowds. The Mission paper, Rahnuma, is being published by the College press, and has practically become the official organ of the British Commander. Schools will doubtless open soon."

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But if schools and schoolboys are much alike, the world over, vacations in Armenia are very different from American holidays. No boys' camps for Archag and his friends! Their adventures are much more thrilling than your summer hikes and canoeings. There are no patriot-outlaws in our mountains. But I must stop, or I shall be telling you Archag's story, and that would not be fair. Only this, let me say: our author, like all good story-tellers, uses his imagination to make his story come alive; he embroiders, as the French say, upon his facts; but if you will read in the "New York Evening Post," for Saturday, November 29, 1919, the account of Antranik, the Armenian patriot who came to this country to ask help for his countrymen, you will find that fiction is no more romantic than fact, in Asia Minor; and you will find Antranik,—this very same hero, I think,—mentioned in our story.

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Read the story, dear Schoolmate, and make friends with these Armenian boys, who suffer so steadfastly for their country and their God.

Affectionately yours,

FLORENCE CONVERSE.

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ARCHAG
THE
LITTLE ARMENIAN

A DAY AT SCHOOL

The boys had just finished a grammar lesson, and as a reward for paying attention their master was reading them a bit of history. Jousif hodja (schoolmaster) was a tall young man of twenty, very slight, and frail in appearance, with dreamy black eyes. Perfect silence reigned in the smoky old schoolroom while he read in a strong, clear voice:

“The day of battle had come at last!¹ Our men, commanded by Vartan the Mamigonian, had pitched their tents that night on the plain of Avarair. The snowy peak of Ararat was just becoming visible in the early light of dawn, when a sentinel burst into Vartan’s tent, crying: ‘The Persians! The Persians! they are coming!’ The chief went out from his tent and climbed a hill around which we had made our camp. His piercing eye quickly distinguished a black mass moving slowly, like surging waves, along the Tabriz road. From time to time the silence of the plain was broken by a dull threatening sound like the distant rumbling of thunder.... Vartan was fighting in the thick of the fray; he seemed all unconscious of his wounds and of the blood streaming from them; in despair he saw his soldiers, overpowered by numbers, fast giving way. The ground was strewn with the dead bodies of Armenians; the cries of the wounded were drowned by the yells of the Persians. Vartan, with several brave followers, had made his way almost up to Khan Mustapha, general of the hostile forces, when a Kurd rushed upon him and dealt him a violent blow with his scimitar, striking the back of his neck. Stunned by the shock, the Mamigonian sank to earth, and was immediately surrounded by a dozen devils; one cut off his legs, another, leaning over him with a grimace, thrust his cutlass into the breast of the ill-starred hero——”

[2]

“But I don’t want him to die,” sobbed a boy of twelve. “Oh, master, why did God let him?”

[3]

Some of the older boys began to laugh, but Jousif hodja sternly silenced them, and going to the child, said to him:

“Come, Archag, quiet yourself; envy our Vartan, if you will, admire him, but don’t give him pity. His martyr’s death has sustained and fortified thousands of Armenians; even to-day, after so many centuries of oppression and sorrow, to whom should we lift our eyes if not to our national hero? We all love him, and in the hour of danger we shall fight and die as worthy sons of Vartan.”

At these words the child gradually became quiet, dried his tears and said:

“I want to follow his example.”

The master stroked Archag’s black curls; then, the bell having already rung, he dismissed his pupils with the benediction. In the twinkling of an eye the boys had put on their pretty red slippers, strapped up their books, and were running through the streets of Van, shouting, and chattering like a flock of sparrows. Archag was among the first to scamper out; he ran like a shot as far as the Cathedral, then turning at the back of the Bishop’s house, he followed a lane which led to the shore of the lake.

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His parents lived outside the city in one of those flat-roofed dwellings so common in Asia Minor. His father owned a great deal of livestock, herds of sheep and goats, as well as droves of horses and camels; Archag breathed a sigh of content as he caught sight of his father’s house at a turn of the road. A young girl of sixteen was coming to meet him; it was his sister Nizam, who made a great pet of him. He threw his arms about her neck, and asked in a wheedling tone:

“Tell me, have you been making something good for my supper?”

“Fie! you greedy boy,” replied the young girl. “You think of nothing but eating. Tell me instead what you did at school to-day.”

At these words a shadow came over the child’s face.

“Oh! Nizam, to-day is Vartan’s Day, so Jousif hodja read us a description of the battle of Avarair. Only think! Three thousand Persians fell upon the Armenians, who had only five hundred soldiers, and they killed Vartan and all his men. Don’t you think our hero must have been like Jousif hodja?”

[5]

Nizam blushed at the name of the schoolmaster; for, to tell the truth, the two young people were secretly in love.

“Now Archag, stop; what are you talking about? Come along to supper. Mamma

has been making tomato pilaaf for us.”

“Pilaaf!² how jolly!” and Archag ran gayly toward the house. He burst into the kitchen like a gust of wind, went to his father, Boghos³ Effendi, and kissed his hand, threw his books into a corner, took off his slippers,⁴ and then sat down on the floor between his mother and his little brother Levon.

At Van, as in other remote towns in Asia Minor, chairs and tables were still objects of luxury, and were rarely seen. People just sat down on the floor.

Boghos Effendi was a tall man about forty years of age. Like his sons, he wore the zouboun, a long robe with a flannel girdle, opening over white cotton trousers; on his head he wore a turban of yellow silk. His wife, Hanna badgi,⁵ the mother of our little friends, wore a brown silk dress made in European fashion. Her hair hung down over her shoulders in two long black braids. We have already made the acquaintance of pretty Nizam and Levon. Two menservants, Bedros and Krikor,⁶ and an old serving woman named Gulenia, completed the family circle.

Seated around an earthenware tray,⁷ each one, armed with a large spoon, dipped at will into a dish of pilaaf. On their knees they had, each one, a large piece of bread piled with olives, but this bread was quite different from ours; it was thin and flat, rather like a soft pancake than bread. For ten minutes no sound was heard but the crunching of jaws and the clatter of spoons (sounds which I would by no means advise my readers to imitate); then, before standing up, each rinsed the mouth and fingers again in a bowl of water.



HAPPY ARMENIA

After supper, Archag and Levon ran off together to the stable to say good-night to their favorite little goat. Because of the terrible cold which prevails in Asia Minor during several months of the year, the stables are built under the ground; in this way they have the advantage of being warm in winter and very cool in summer. Boghos Effendi had a stable for the horses, one shed for the sheep and another for the goats. Our two children had brought a handful of salt from the kitchen, and the pretty Belette seemed to consider it a treat. Levon amused himself by pulling the long silky hairs of the little animal, a magnificent Angora

goat. They would no doubt have stayed all night with their horned friends if their mamma had not called them in to go to bed. And even when called they did not obey very promptly; it was so delightful in the stable.

When they got back to the house they took a large mattress and a thick wadded coverlet and spread them on the floor. In one corner of the room there stood a little altar with a picture of Saint Gregory the Illuminator,⁸ dimly lighted by a night lamp. The two children knelt down before the picture of their patron saint to say their prayers. Then they took off their zoubouns and stockings, rolled themselves up in a quilt, and were soon fast asleep in spite of the hardness of their bed. The people of the Orient are not accustomed to iron and wooden beds like ours.

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After supper Nizam had gone, as was her habit, to sit on a great rock high above the house. At her feet was spread the lake, with its marvelous frame of high mountains whose snow-crowned peaks, now flushing red in the rays of the setting sun, seemed to be in the heart of a vast fire. But the young Armenian girl had no eyes for the beauty of the landscape; she was thinking of her mother whose delicate health caused her great anxiety.

Twilight falls rapidly in the Orient, and now the jackals were yelping, and the dogs were howling in reply, and the moon, a pale yellow crescent, was reflected in the dark waters of the lake. Aroused from her reverie by the growing darkness, Nizam hurried back to the house, where her parents were waiting for her that they might close the doors. Orientals go to bed soon after the sun, and before long perfect stillness reigned in the solitary house.

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1 During the fifth century, A. D., the Persians, then dominating Armenia, were determined to crush out Christianity in the land, and to compel the people to become Zoroastrians or fire-worshippers, like themselves. But the Armenians withstood this, ready to die rather than deny their faith. Led by the valiant Prince Vartan, they fought and made a brave resistance against an enemy greatly superior in numbers. They were vanquished, and Vartan, their commander-in-chief, fell, with many of his followers, at the Battle of Avaraïr. ↑

2 Pilaaf, or pillau, a favorite dish of Oriental people, consists of rice boiled with mutton-fat; it is usually highly spiced, and often contains raisins or almonds. ↑

3 Boghos Effendi: Mr. Paul. Family names are seldom used by Armenians. ↑

4 Orientals always take off their shoes before entering a house. ↑

5 Badgi: Sister, the title commonly given to women. ↑

6 Bedros: Peter; Krikor: Gregory; Gulenia: Rose. ↑

7 In some parts of Armenia, the meal is served in the middle of the floor; the food is placed on a round tray of wood or copper, about three feet in diameter, and standing about six inches from the floor. All the food is in one dish, from which each person helps himself; the thin, soft bread can be twisted into a sort of spoon, and used to convey liquid food to the mouth, gradually disappearing with the food. There are thus no dishes to be washed. It is customary to wash the hands before and after a meal. ↑

8 The patron Saint of Armenia. He lived in the third century, and was the restorer of the Church in Armenia, suffering hardship and persecution for many years. The Armenian Church is very ancient, Christianity having been brought to the people in Apostolic times. ↑

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CHAPTER II

AN INTERESTING JOURNEY

Fine weather had followed the April showers, and as was his custom, Boghos Effendi was making preparations for a visit to his farm at the foot of Mount Ararat,¹ on the Persian frontier. This time, Archag was to go with his father, and the little boy was beside himself with joy. He was to be absent several months, galloping about all day on his pretty Mustang; and the Highland Farm with its great herds of horses and flocks of sheep seemed to his imagination an earthly Paradise indeed. Every morning when he woke up his first question was: "O, papa, are we going to-morrow?" He talked of nothing but this famous journey, and dreamed of it at night.

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At last the longed-for day arrived. It was still dark when Hanna badgi went to wake Archag. She gave him a little shake:

"Get up quickly, my son; your father is saddling the horses already."

In the twinkling of an eye the child was on his feet; he ran to the courtyard to wash himself in cold water, then came back to eat his breakfast. A bowl of goats' milk, still warm, two pieces of flat bread, and some cucumbers which Nizam had gathered the evening before, were waiting for him in the kitchen. He ate heartily. His mother's face was sad, as she sat watching him, and from time to time she stealthily wiped away a tear. Her boy was leaving her for the first time, and her heart sank as she thought of the dangers of the journey. The Persian frontier was infested by bands of Kurds, living by rapine and plunder, and as there was no mail service between Van and the villages of Ararat, she would be without news of her dear ones, and under a constant strain of anxiety.

The moment for departure had arrived. Two zaptiehs (police-officers) were to accompany Boghos Effendi; indeed the only safe way to travel in Asia Minor is with an escort of police; travelers are thus under the protection of the Government, and the brigands will not venture to attack them.

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"Haïdé, Archag, make haste," called his father, "we can't wait for you any longer."

The women and little Levon came out to bid the travelers a last good-by. Archag cried as he embraced them, and his mother put around his neck a medal, blessed by the Catholicos of Echmiadzin,² as a protection against all danger. "May our holy Virgin guard you, my dearest boy," said she. "Don't forget to ask her that every night."

Mustang, Archag's handsome Tartar stallion, was getting impatient, so his master leaped lightly on his back. The horses, exhilarated by the fresh morning air, broke into a gallop; Boghos Effendi and his son waved their handkerchiefs; one more last look, then the house disappeared behind a clump of trees.

The sun had just risen, and its first rays were gilding the blue waters of the lake. After following the shore for two hours, our travelers began to ascend toward the higher ranges of mountains. Archag was leaving Van for the first time, and his eyes were charmed by the beauty of the landscape. At this season the vegetation was wonderfully luxuriant; the horses now trod on carpets of hyacinths and wild tulips, or again, they pressed their way between hedges of yellow eglantine. Great blue-green butterflies chased each other, flitting from flower to flower. Presently the travelers entered an immense tract of pine forest, and the horses neighed with content as they sniffed the good resinous odors. Occasionally, their way was impeded by a stream, swollen to a torrent by the snows of spring. The water leaped over huge boulders, sweeping along in its mad course the trunks of ancient pines weary of battling against the elements. At this time of year it was often difficult to find a ford, and when his horse had bravely gone breast-deep into the stream, Archag, confused by the deafening noise of the water, would be seized with dizziness, close his eyes and cling to his Mustang. But what joy to arrive safe and sound on the other side! He would dry himself in the sun, and then go on his way. Toward evening, they observed, far away to the north, an isolated cone of purest white, rising above the dark mountains which loomed up all around, and glistening in the sunlight.

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"Ararat!" cried Boghos Effendi, pointing it out to his companions.

Ararat! What memories the name awakened in Archag's mind! He gazed with awe at this storied mountain, which was said to have been the northern boundary of the earthly Paradise, and the resting-place of Noah's Ark. Presently it vanished in the clouds, and the little boy had a fancy that now, after having bounded the Garden of Eden, it was about to become part of the heavenly Paradise.

Soon after this, they arrived at a khan (a sort of inn), and on entering the courtyard they found the place in a state of great excitement. The harem of the kaimakan (governor) of Erzeroum had just arrived, and the ladies, veiled in black from head to foot, were hurrying out of their carriages, and gliding into the house like shadows. Eunuchs followed carrying their baggage, and the sight of these supercilious-looking black men made Archag draw closer to his father. At the farther end of the courtyard there were merchants engaged in unloading their camels; they stacked against the wall great bales of rugs, woven in far-away Kurdistan, which they were taking to Trebizond. From there the Kurd rugs would go to Europe and find their places in the homes of rich people in Paris or London.

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In front of the house some Gregorian priests, returning from a pilgrimage to Echmiadzin, were drinking coffee and smoking narguilehs (water-pipes). They were sitting on the ground around a mangal,³ for in Armenia the nights are still very cold in the month of May. Boghos Effendi approached them to kiss their hands, as a mark of respect due to hadjis (pilgrims), whereupon the priests

received him in a friendly way, and made room for him by their side.

Night had fallen, a dark night, with no moon. The other travelers drew near to the pleasant warmth of the mangal. There they all were: the Armenian pilgrims, the Kurd merchants, the Turkish pashas with their suite, traveling on official business, an old Persian on his way to Angora, and the camel-drivers, with their weather-stained faces, chewing balls of resin, without pause. Pretty soon, an Arab, a native of Bagdad, began to tell a story worthy of a place in "The Arabian Nights." Except for his voice there were no sounds but the bubbling of the narguilehs or the distant cry of a hyena lying in wait for prey. Our friend Archag, sitting beside his father, with his pretty red slippers placed in front of him, heard the monotonous drone of the story-teller as if in a dream. The gurgling of a camel roused him from his drowsiness for an instant, but he soon relapsed into the blessed sleep of childhood. His father had to take him up in his arms, and lay him as he was, all dressed, on the bed which had been prepared for him. [18]

Boghos Effendi stayed several days at Bayazid, a fortress on the Russian frontier, crowning a great rock; and here Archag was much impressed by the Tartars, with their high boots, their poniards at their side, and their tall Astrakhan caps. These men spent their evenings in wild rides about the valley below the town, flourishing their sabers above their heads, and uttering shrill cries which re-echoed from the great rocks. But the boy was beginning to grow impatient at the length of the journey, so he was very glad when his father told him that they were to leave Bayazid the next morning, and would arrive at their destination two days later. [19]

The country now was quite barren and uncultivated; from time to time they would meet a Kurd shepherd, clad only in a sheep-skin, who cast unfriendly glances at them. Everyday, at noon, the travelers stopped near some spring to eat their luncheon; then, wearied by the long hours in the saddle, they would stretch themselves out and take a good nap, before proceeding on their journey.

This hour of quiet was the hardest part of the day for our friend Archag; he hated to sleep, and his father had strictly forbidden him to roam about. The two zaptiehs used to snore away with a good conscience, without compunction, and Krikor would respond to them with a nasal grunt very much like a pig. Usually, Archag amused himself by plucking a spear of grass and tickling the sleepers under their noses; sometimes, to give variety to his diversion, he would pinch the tips of their ears or pull their hair. Then the men would swear in their sleep, turn over, or strike out into the air with their fists, to the great amusement of the culprit. Luckily for him, they never woke up, or they would have made him pay well for his impudence. [20]

Now, on the second day after leaving Bayazid, Archag found no amusement in his usual sport; he was bored, and began to throw stones at the cones on the pine-trees. He seldom missed his aim, and gave a shout of triumph whenever a cone fell to the ground. In the midst of this sport a slight noise above his head made him look up, and he saw a pretty brown squirrel perched on the branch of a tree. The little creature looked at him in a mocking way, then sprang to another tree, and the boy followed him softly, forgetting all his fine resolutions. [21]

Our two companions, Archag with his nose in the air, the squirrel leaping from tree to tree, strayed farther and farther away from the encampment, and when the child, weary of his pursuit, concluded to retrace his steps, he saw that he was a long distance from the place where he had left his father. He was starting to go back at once, when he heard a low growling sound from behind a big rock, and you may imagine his terror when he saw a great brown bear making its way toward him. The child thought it was all over with him, but he did not lose his head; he recalled a story he had once read, and lay down on the ground, feigning death. His heart beat fast indeed, but the bear, after turning him over with its paws, smelt him carefully, and went on its way, heedless of the wanderer, and Archag got up and took to his heels, running to throw himself into his father's arms. Boghos Effendi turned pale on hearing of the danger into which his child had run; but he did not scold him, for he thought that he had been punished enough. [22]

The rest of the journey was accomplished without incident. All the shepherds came out to meet the travelers, and they made a triumphal entry into the Highland Farm. [23]

¹ Ararat, the famous mountain, where Noah's Ark rested, is situated near the frontiers of Russia, Persia, and Turkey. It is the highest mountain of Western Asia, and its wonderful beauty and grandeur are praised by all travelers. ↑

² The Catholicos, or Patriarch, of Echmiadzin, is the Primate of the Armenian Church, and the successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator. ↑

CHAPTER III

THE HIGHLAND FARM

The next morning, Archag rose with the dawn. He went down to the courtyard, drew a bucketful of cold water from the well, and plunged his head in it, shivering. Then he went back to the kitchen, and hastily ate his yoghurt (a sort of curdled milk) which he spread on bread. His breakfast was dispatched in less than five minutes, and calling "Good morning" to his father, he rushed out of doors.

The farm of Boghos Effendi was on a plateau three or four kilometers in length, resting on the lower foothills of Ararat. The house was low but spacious, and served as a dwelling for a dozen or more shepherds. Great herds of horses and flocks of sheep grazed freely in the fine pastures which extended as far as eye could see. The nights being very cold, the live-stock had to be brought in every evening to the caves and cellars which served as stables.

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Archag was enchanted as he looked around. The sun had just risen, and shed a rosy light on the glaciers of mighty Ararat. The country on which it shone was wild and dreary, leading one to conjecture that at some period a terrible cataclysm must have shaken it to the very foundations. The plateau terminated at either end in a steep precipice, at the base of which rushed a noisy stream; it was sheltered on the north by a wall of impregnable rock; on the south the wooded slopes descended gently to the valley. Archag had never seen anything like it, and was greatly impressed. As he roamed about, here and there, he discovered a little lake formed in the crater of an extinct volcano. He clapped his hands as he caught sight of the emerald waves, and jumping over the border of rocks, he plunged his hand in the water. It was icy cold. He then amused himself with skipping stones, but at the end of half an hour he had become tired of this sport, and resumed his journey of exploration. The sheep had gone toward the house, for it was time for them to be milked. Appetite comes quickly on the mountains, and Archag, having a strange feeling of emptiness in his stomach, asked one of the shepherds to give him a glass of milk. He drank it with relish, and then licked off the cream which had formed a thick mustache on his lips.

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Next, he ran to look at the horses, for like all Orientals, he had a passion for them. There were about two hundred here; small animals with intelligent eyes and long tails which swept the ground. One of them especially excited his admiration; it was a five-year-old stallion, entirely black except for a white star on the forehead. Archag went up to it, holding out a bit of sugar, which the animal took with a distrustful air.

"Take care, Baron Archag!" called a shepherd, "the very devil is in that beast. I mounted him this morning, and he gave me a good shaking up, I can tell you! I left the saddle on, so he might get used to it."

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But Archag, not listening, had already jumped on the horse's back. The creature gave a start on feeling this unaccustomed burden, kicked, stood up on his hind legs, then, seeing that nothing could rid him of his rider, darted off like an arrow toward the valley. But Archag had been used to horses ever since he was a baby, and the stallion did not succeed in throwing him by any of these tricks. He sat up straight in the saddle, holding the reins lightly. This mad ride was enchanting to him, and he had no sense of danger. At length the horse's high spirit began to flag; he stopped a moment to drink at a stream, then started up a steep slope. After running half way round the valley, he returned to the pasture of his own accord, and Archag soon caught sight of the Highland Farm. The shepherds, well frightened by these pranks, came to meet him and praise him for his courage. The little boy sprang to the ground, gently patted his steed, and wiped off with his handkerchief the sweat that covered him.

After that, our friend took a ride on his new horse every morning, and before long claimed him as his own. A young shepherd lad, called Jakoub, was his companion on these rides. Boghos Effendi had not the time to go about with him, and he considered his son still too much of a child to ride about alone over hill and dale. The two boys would go off early in the morning, taking their dinner of hard-boiled eggs, cheese, bread and fruit with them, and would not return until

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evening. The country offered a great variety of excursions; in two months the boys had roamed over all the valleys, climbed all the hills in the vicinity, and explored the forests, still almost virgin. With this sort of life, Archag's face grew brown, his chest broadened, and his muscles hardened.

"Where shall we go to-morrow?" he asked his new friend one evening.

"To the Kutshukdéré (Little Valley), and we will go in bathing in the lake."

"Yok yok, (no, no,)" replied Archag, "we have been there four times already."

"Well, then, let's go to the village of Buldur."

"No, I don't care anything about that."

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Archag was in a naughty mood; he kicked his heels against the rock on which he was sitting.

"We might go to the cave of Karadéré (Black Valley)," said Jakoub, after a while, hesitating, "only——"

"Only what?"

"Only the neighborhood is infested by brigands, and your father would never let us go there if he knew."

"Is it far from here?"

"Six hours on horseback; but the road is bad, and hard to find."

"Have you been there yourself?"

"Yes, last year with my dayeh (uncle). Just imagine a hall underground, as high as a cathedral, all decorated with festoons and lace of stone! I never saw anything so beautiful in all my life, and I would just like to go there again like everything!" cried Jakoub, quite carried away by his enthusiasm.

"Didn't the brigands do anything to you?"

"Oh, a poor shepherd boy like me? They knew well enough that I hadn't a penny. But you, you see, you're the son of the rich Boghos Effendi; it would be worth their while to put themselves out for such good pickings."

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"Pshaw, they wouldn't know who I am. I'll put on old clothes, and any one would have to be pretty sharp to recognize me. All right, then, that's settled for to-morrow; come and wake me up to make sure. I'll get our lunch ready."

The thought of this adventurous ride had restored Archag's good humor. He stood up, gave his comrade a slap on the back, and ran away from him, calling out:

"Catch me if you can!"

He was more nimble than Jakoub, and soon disappeared in the farm-yard.

At four the next morning, he awoke with a start at the sound of a servant's rap on the door. In an instant he was on his feet, and had rolled up his mattress and coverlets, and stuffed them into a cupboard. His father was still in bed when Archag went into his room to speak to him.

"Pariluis hairick (Good morning, papa)," he said, kissing his father's hand. "Jakoub and I are off for a ride. It's so hot we want to start early."

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"Tschatkeretsick (Very well)," replied Boghos Effendi. "Be careful, and don't be too late in coming home this evening."

These last words were lost on Archag, who had already left the room. Jakoub was waiting for him in the kitchen:

"I've saddled the horses; everything is ready."

"Good boy! Have you had any breakfast?"

"No, not yet."

Archag offered his companion a bit of cheese, setting his pretty teeth in his own portion as he did so.

"These poor sheep!" said he. "They give us their milk and we eat their lambs."

Men are really very unkind."

Jakoub stared at him in astonishment.

"Bless my soul, I never thought of that, nor the sheep, either, you may be sure; they are too stupid."

"Luckily for them; but they do suffer just the same as we do, and you mustn't hit them any more."

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"I promise not to, if that can give you any pleasure; but we had better be off, instead of arguing about the sheep."

"Right you are!"

A few minutes later the two boys were speeding along, rocked by the motion of the galloping horses, which made good headway, undaunted by the rough, stony road.

After riding up the Karadéré (Black Valley) for about three hours, they had to climb a slope covered with fallen rocks and débris. They followed a narrow trail which was scarcely discernible, and Jakoub lost his way twice, so that they had to retrace their steps. For several hours they did not meet a human being, although from time to time they heard the growl of a bear in the distance, or a troop of wild asses ran away from them in fright. Archag was beginning to be afraid they would never find the cave, when his companion gave a joyful shout:

"Here we are all right, this time," and he pointed out a ravine sparsely overgrown with shrubs.

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They sprang to the ground and tied their horses. Archag looked all around.

"You must be mistaken," he said at last, "there isn't a sign of any cave here."

Then Jakoub showed him an opening half hidden by the bushes and so narrow that it seemed almost impossible that any one could squeeze through it. Jakoub, however, had already disappeared with the agility of a snake, and our friend attempted to follow him. But it was no easy matter; the rocks held him as in a vise, and he was nearly strangled. His feet dangled in space, he was in a critical situation, there was no way to climb either up or down. Then, suddenly, he felt himself being pulled from below, and the next minute he was at Jakoub's side, very dizzy indeed. The two boys were at the top of a sunken passage, which they followed valiantly, making their way down with many a slip, until at last they came to the end. Here Jakoub lighted his lantern, and they cried out together in wonder and surprise. The chamber to which they had found their way was so high that they could scarcely make out the vaulted roof. Marvelous stalactites gave the place a magic beauty; along the walls were ranged thrones and seats wrought with artistic grace, which seemed to beckon them to rest; at their feet crept stone monsters of repulsive form. Archag wondered if he were really awake, or if he had been transported in a dream to some subterranean palace of the "Arabian Nights." Behind a row of columns was an outlet leading to a gallery, and the boys set out to explore this also, but when they had taken perhaps a hundred steps, they were obliged to stoop down and crawl along the ground, for the passage had become no more than a narrow tunnel in the rock.

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"Halt!" cried Jakoub, who had taken the lead.

"What's the matter?" asked Archag.

"Look!"

The tunnel had come to an abrupt end, and a black chasm yawned before them. Jakoub inspected it with his lantern, and found that it was a pit full of water. For a while they amused themselves by throwing in stones to sound the depth and then retraced their steps. At length they regained the entrance to the cave.

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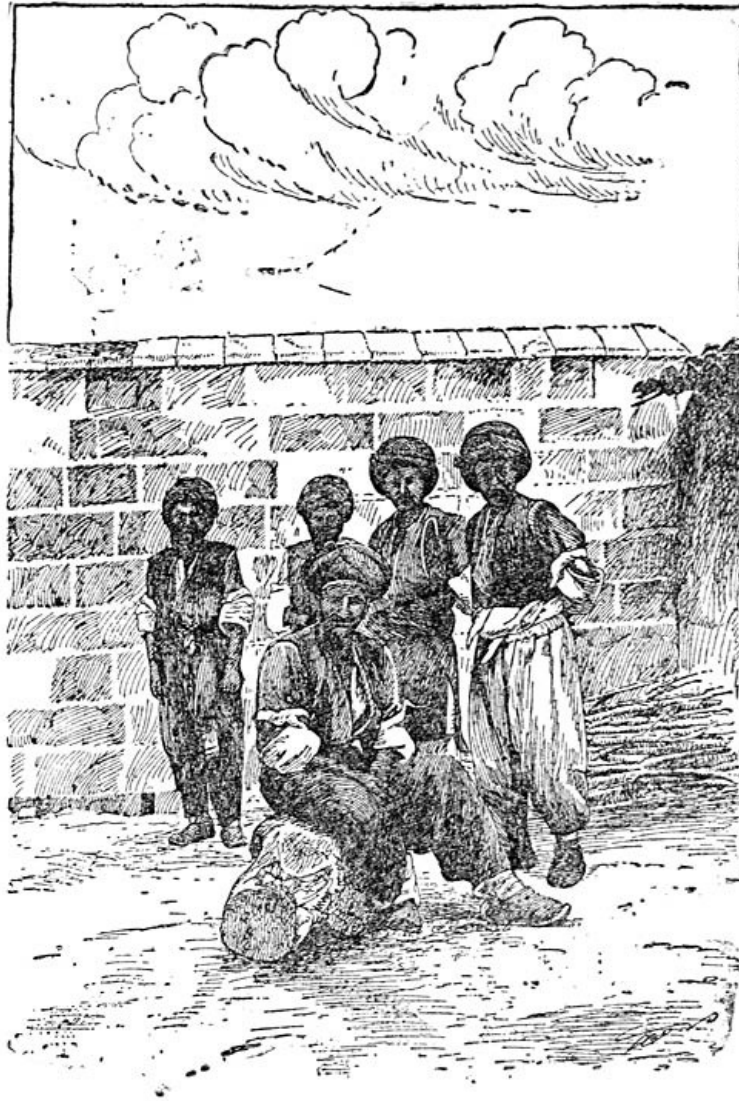
"That was splendid!" said Archag, "but I'm glad enough to breathe fresh air again and get away from that everlasting night."

Their escapade had made them hungry, and they ate their luncheon eagerly. Then they lay down in the shade of a rock and fell fast asleep.

Archag, who was not in the habit of taking a siesta, was the first to wake, and he rubbed his eyes in bewilderment at sight of two cross-looking men standing near him. He gave Jakoub a kick, and pointed to them in silence.

"Well, my little friends," said one of the men, with a crafty look, "waked up at last, have you? You have had a good nap there, Machallah! Now you are going to

follow us quietly without any nonsense, or vaī sizi" (the worse for you)," and the "bravo" touched the butt of his pistol.



KURDS

Both boys realized at once that they were in the power of the brigands. Never in all their life had they seen persons of such forbidding appearance: big rough fellows they were, with bristling beards, noses like eagles' beaks, and sharp teeth all ready to bite, like the fangs of a wolf. They were clad in long cloaks, worked with silver; at the belt of each shone the butt of a pistol and the handle of a yatagan. By their speech the boys easily recognized them as Kurds, the sworn enemies of their race. God alone knew what fate was in store for them!

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"Mount your horses and move on," said the elder of the brigands.

Our two friends obeyed promptly, and each bandit led a horse by its bridle along the path, a dangerous one, which clung to the side of a sheer precipice and overhung the deep gorge below. After riding nearly an hour, they came to a valley confined between high mountains. Here the bandits blindfolded the boys, and a quarter of an hour later they bade them dismount. They were in a spacious cave, lighted up by a number of pine torches, for the daylight scarcely penetrated the place. A dozen brigands were sitting in a circle around a wood fire, eating and drinking; the walls of the cavern resounded with their loud shouts of laughter. When they saw the two boys they invited them to share their repast, and our friends obeyed with alacrity, for the ride had sharpened their appetite.

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Archag looked all around with curiosity; he was no longer afraid, and since he had had something to eat, he found some amusement in the adventure. He had concluded, reasonably enough, that since the men had offered them food, they were not going to kill them. The brigands plied him with questions, to which he replied quite simply, and his remarks often provoked a smile from the company. Jakoub, on the other hand did not open his mouth except to eat, and his eyes were big with fear. He did not listen to what was said, while Archag followed the bandits' conversation with great interest. One of them, a young fellow with a scarcely perceptible mustache, was telling his latest exploit:

"I had been at Bayazid two weeks, looking out in vain for some stroke of luck; but one would have said that Mohammed had forgotten his faithful ones; I hadn't been able to take a single purse; I was suffering from hunger and had to pull my belt tighter every day. At last, one evening, I saw a richly dressed man pass on his way to the hamam (bath). I followed him, and it went to my heart to have to give up my last piastre for an entrance fee. But once in, I went, as if by chance, and sat down beside him, and I praised the beauty of his beard. 'Seven times happy,' said I to him, 'he upon whom Allah has bestowed a beard like thine, a plain mark of wisdom.'

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"The stout fellow bridled and thanked me with a smile.

"'Thy servant,' I continued, 'is still very young; a scant half-dozen hairs chase each other over my chin; but being as yet unable to pretend to wisdom, I always seek the society of learned and erudite men, for their words are as sweet as honey and as intoxicating as cerevisia.'

"By talk like this I won the confidence of the fool; and before long, by worming it out of him I had learned his story. He was a rich merchant from Bagdad, who had been up the Tigris to sell a consignment of coffee and to buy Kurdistan rugs. He had been successful in his business, and was planning to set out for his native town the next morning. I passed myself off for the son of a caravan master of Aleppo, reading law at Ispahan, and now returning home for my vacation. In a short time we were the best friends in the world. I ordered innumerable cups of coffee and portions of hasheesh, for which I allowed him to pay. When we left the bath, my companion was completely under the influence of the intoxicating drug; he couldn't take a step without leaning heavily on my arm. I had arranged my game in advance, and when we were in the lonely part of the town behind the citadel, I attacked him and relieved him of his belt, all lined with gold pieces. He was so stupefied by my behavior that he couldn't say a word. Then, before leaving him, I cut his beard, 'for,' said I, 'noble descendant of the prophet, your hair will make me a magnificent false beard, and thanks to your profound wisdom, your own will make speed to grow again.' A smart kick sent him rolling into a ditch, where I left him to work off his hasheesh. I hadn't time to bother with him any more; I hurried back to my inn, jumped astride my horse, and came straight back here to you."

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During the narration of this tale, the boys, overcome with drowsiness, had dropped off to sleep, and the brigands had laid them on a bed of leaves, where they slept the whole night through without waking.

Meanwhile, Boghos Effendi had been tormented by the most painful anxiety. At six o'clock, finding that the boys had not yet returned, he supposed that they had been delayed. But when at eight they had not come, he began to be seriously alarmed. He sent the shepherds out in bands to scour the neighborhood; but they were unable to bring him any tidings, and the poor father passed the night in mortal fear. At four in the morning, he was about to institute a new search, when he was told that a boy was waiting to speak to him. He went out immediately, and found a Kurd shepherd lad in the courtyard, who handed him a letter. He broke the seal with a trembling hand. There were but a few words to read:

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"Your son and his companion have been taken prisoners by the brigands. Send one of your servants without escort to the cave of Kara Dagh, bringing the sum of one hundred pounds and the children will be set at liberty.

"ESSAD CHAN.

"P. S.—If the money is not there by five o'clock this evening, you will never see your son alive again."

Boghos Effendi put the letter in his pocket and looked up to ask the messenger some questions, but the lad had already disappeared. It was useless to go after him, and so the unhappy father called his steward and two old shepherds to come and give him their advice. They all, without hesitation, counseled him to send the money as quickly as possible, for Essad Chan was the most dangerous brigand in the country, and had both force and cunning at his command. Boghos Effendi then gave his steward the hundred pounds, and charged him to make haste so that he might reach the cavern before noon.

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When the boys awoke, they were very much surprised to find themselves in a cave. Little by little, they recalled the events of the previous day, and began to wonder anxiously what the future had in store for them. The brigands, however, gave them no cause for complaint. A bountiful breakfast was offered them, and then one of the bandits invited Archag to play chess with him. The boy accepted with pleasure; he was a good player, but shrewd enough to let his opponent win.

Another brigand took up his tamboura (a sort of mandolin) and fell to singing. In this way the morning passed pleasantly enough for the two captives; they were very happy, however, when some one came to tell them that they were free. They were blindfolded once more, so that they might not be able to describe the exact situation of the cave, and the brigands, on removing their bandages, made the boys swear on the crucifix not to follow them, nor try to find their hiding-place. The two lads took the oath, only too happy to get off so easily.

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"Only," said Archag, "I am very thirsty, and I should very much like to have something to drink."

The brigands burst out laughing, and one of them offered Archag his gourd, with a friendly slap on the shoulder. Archag thanked him, and then the two boys put spurs to their horses and went off at full gallop. When, after a time, they slackened their pace, Kara Dagħ was far behind them.

"If that wasn't a scrape!" cried Archag. "Whatever will my father say?"

Jakoub shrugged his shoulders in reply, and they rode on in silence.

When our friend caught sight of his father, who was anxiously watching for them at the entrance to the farm, he jumped down from his horse, gave the reins to Jakoub, and ran to meet him and to ask forgiveness.

"My son," replied Boghos Effendi, "your imprudence might have cost you your life. You know that when I go on a journey I never take more money with me than is absolutely necessary. If I had not sold three horses the other day to that Persian from Tabriz, I should not have been able to pay for your ransom, and then you may be sure the robbers would have listened to none of your cries or tears; they would have kept their word and killed you. God has had compassion on us, and He has given you a salutary lesson. Never forget what anxiety you have caused your father to suffer, nor the money your folly has cost me, hard-earned money on which I was depending for this winter's expenses; and try to be more discreet in the future."

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Archag promised, and was in tears as he kissed his father's hand. He no longer felt himself a hero, but realized that he was only a little boy come home from a mad escapade. He never thought of this adventure afterward without a blush of shame.

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CHAPTER IV

NIZAM'S WEDDING

Boghos Effendi forbade his son to go away from the farm again, and the days that followed were very long for our little friend, so he was glad when his father told him that they would soon be going back to Van. Winter sets in early on these high table-lands, and Boghos Effendi wanted to get home before cold weather. The shepherds were very sorry to see Archag go; his high spirits had brightened their monotonous days, and they made him promise to come back another summer.

The journey home was accomplished without any remarkable adventures, and at the end of three weeks Archag was once more in his mother's arms. "How nice it is to be at home!" he kept saying, over and over again.

A week after his arrival he resumed his lessons. He had well-nigh forgotten them during his holidays, and had to work hard and steadily to catch up with his schoolmates. During the long winter evenings he never tired of talking about his journey, and of the Highland Farm, and everything he had seen. Levon listened with mouth wide open, in rapt admiration of his older brother.

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An important event now turned the current of the boys' thoughts into a new channel, and occupied all their spare hours. Jousif hodja had asked Boghos Effendi for the hand of Nizam, and the Feast of Saint Sylvester was set for the wedding-day. So from November on, the house was like a bee-hive, for there was the trousseau to be finished, and purchases had to be made, to say nothing of the preparations for the wedding feast. As the days passed, the excitement increased. Every afternoon the neighbors came to offer their help and gratify their curiosity. They examined the presents, criticised them, and expressed their

opinions, to the great exasperation of old Gulenia, who scolded them roundly.

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Archag and Levon wrote the invitations, and helped in the kitchen whenever there were eggs to be beaten and dough to be stirred.

The morning of the wedding-day came at last. Nizam, arrayed in rose-colored silk, sat in the middle of the reception room; her head was covered with a veil held at the temples by large gold sequins. She sat stiff and silent, for propriety forbade her to open her mouth on this day even to reply to the congratulations of her relatives and friends. Archag, always a tease, declared that she would make up for it later. Her face was pale, and there were dark rings around her eyes; she had been up since dawn and was still fasting, for she was to make her Communion in church after hearing the nuptial Mass. She cast envious glances at her guests, who were eating and drinking, and apparently enjoying themselves very much.

About eleven o'clock, the firing of cannon announced that it was time to start for church. Nizam rose, and her mother drew the veil over her face; then two youths set her on a white horse which was waiting for her in the courtyard. The young bride of the Orient has to make a show of resistance as an expression of sorrow at leaving her father and mother, and the friends of the bridegroom must drag her out of the house by force. The parents, for their part, bewail the departure of their daughter.

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Nizam was fairly successful in feigning a sorrow which she really did not feel at all, for she loved Jousif hodja. With one hand she held the bridle of her horse, and with the other she pressed to her bosom a mirror, a symbol of the purity which she was to bring to her husband. All her friends followed, uttering cries of grief. The bridegroom and his friends were awaiting Nizam's retinue in front of the Cathedral. When they saw the company enter the square, they gave shouts of welcome and fired pistols in token of their joy.

Nizam knelt down beside Jousif while the choir boys sang a charagan (hymn). The Bishop, vested in his chimere had ascended the steps of the altar: he intoned the Mass, and asked the betrothed if they desired to become husband and wife, and upon their assent, he gave them the Host, and held the chalice for them to drink of the red wine, the blood of Jesus Christ. Then, as they knelt together, he blessed them with an ivory crucifix, slipped the wedding-ring over their fingers, and thus united them for the sharing of the joys and sorrows of life. Then Nizam and Jousif stood up, and more charagans were sung, interspersed with the firing of guns and cannon.

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The religious ceremony over, the bridal pair and their guests went to the house of Jousif hodja, where a great collation awaited them. The plates were heaped with portions of turkey, goose, woodcock and grouse; then came a course of pastry and Turkish sweets: baklava¹ with pistachio and hazel nuts, walnut cakes, lokums² melting in the mouth, preserved peaches and plums, orangeade, cedrats, colored sugar-plums, and brown and white nougat. Coffee was served in tiny silver cups, passed around by the servants; some of the guests preferred sherbets (iced drinks) flavored with rose, violet or vanilla.

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All were happy and gay: the bridal pair alone were not expected to take part in the general merriment, but sat in formal silence, enthroned at the head of the table.

A white-haired bard sang this ancient ballad, accompanying himself on the tamboura:

“Dark night shrouds the plain of Avaraïr,
The silver moon has hidden herself to weep in silence:
For Vartan and his braves are lying
Dead on the cruel earth.
Suddenly a piercing cry rends the darkness:
'Vartan, Vartan where art thou?'
But nought except the screech-owl
Responds to the maiden's despairing cry.
The fair Shnorig advances, groping her way;
Tearless, her eyes burning with fever,
She hastens over the battle-field
Searching for the body of her betrothed lover,
'Saint Ripsimé,³ protectress of lovers in distress,
Guide her in her search!
Courage well-nigh fails the unhappy maid.
By the light of her lantern she questions the faces of the dead;
At length a sob escapes her;

There at her feet lies her lover, dead.
 Never has he seemed to her more beautiful.
 His face is marble white; his hair ebony black.
 She throws herself upon his neck,
 Trying in vain to restore warmth by her kisses.
 Slowly resuscitated by love,
 The Mamigonian rises.
 His eyes are filled with the terror of the Beyond;
 But his lips murmur:
 'Shnorig, my well-beloved,
 Shnorig, my sweet bride,
 I am going to leave thee;
 The dark visitant calls me and will not wait.
 Death comes to clasp me in his skeleton arms;
 Our love is cut down like the flowers of the field.

'Vartan, Vartan, leave me not!
 I will claim thee from my rival
 Or die with thee!'

She clasps him with rapture;
 She covers his face with kisses;
 She wails out her love like a hyena.
 But her lover can no longer reply;
 The white daisies are dyed crimson with his blood.
 His lips breathe one last sigh,
 And his soul is borne away on the wings of the wind.
 Jealous Death is lying in wait for a second victim:
 He it is who inspires the wretched Shnorig with fatal thoughts.
 Sadly the maiden looks upon the battle-field,
 The plain of Avarair.
 She murmurs a farewell to life,
 And draws the bloody sword from Vartan's body.
 She kisses it with fervor,
 Then plunges it in her own bosom.
 She falls, like a lily cut down in all its beauty.
 Her alabaster arm is thrown around her lover's neck;
 A smile flits across her lips;
 Her soul, in its turn, takes flight.
 And the silent moon hides herself to weep in silence."

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The old musician played sad and mournful harmonies on his tamboura. The guests listened, gazing into the infinite, and dreaming of their unhappy country.

Gradually they all withdrew; the parents took leave of their cherished daughter, weeping, for they were not to see her again for nine months.⁴ Archag walked in front, carrying the lantern.

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¹ Baklava: a sweet and very light paste made with honey. ↑

² Lokum: Turkish paste. ↑

³ Ripsimeh: a noble and beautiful woman who lived at Rome, in the time of Diocletian. Having taken a religious vow, she refused to become the wife of the Emperor, and fled to Armenia. Here the king, Tiridates, wished to marry her, and furious at her refusal, had her put to death. The king was subsequently baptized and became a champion of Christianity in Armenia. ↑

⁴ The young bride is confined to her home for nine months, during which time she may not see her parents or friends. ↑

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CHAPTER V

CENTRAL TURKEY COLLEGE

Three years and a half have elapsed since Nizam's marriage. These years were marked by only one important event in the family of Boghos Effendi: the birth of little Jersebeth, the daughter of Nizam and Jousif hodja. Hanna badgi is still living, but her delicate health causes great anxiety to the other members of the family, who are in constant fear of losing her. Archag is now a lad of sixteen, slight and strong, looking quite eighteen. Last year he spent his holidays at the Highland Farm; this time his visit was not spoiled by adventures such as we have

related; he was a great help to his father, and even took his place at the horse sales.

He has completed the course in the school at Van, and his father has decided to send him to the American College at Aintab. Our friend has heard a great deal about it from his older companions; he is fond of his studies, and delighted to be able to go on with them, for he has little inclination for mercantile life, although he has not yet chosen his vocation. [55]

Boghos Effendi had written to the president of the college, and at last, after two long months of waiting and suspense, the post-master one day gave Archag a letter bearing the Aintab postmark.¹ Our friend made haste to carry it to his father. The president, Dr. Mills, wrote that he would admit Archag to the Sophomore class on payment of twelve Turkish pounds (fifty-five dollars) for the year. The term was to begin on the twentieth of September, and as it was already the twenty-fifth of August, there was no time to be lost, for it was necessary to allow three or four weeks for the journey. A caravan was leaving Van for Aleppo on the first of September, passing through Marash and Aintab, and it was decided that Archag should travel in the company of these merchants. It would have been quite impossible for a boy of his age to take such a journey entirely alone. These last days, filled with a host of preparations, passed all too quickly for our friend, who was feeling sad at the thought of leaving home and family. [56]

The day before his departure he went with his father to the serail to ask for a teskereh (passport). The kaimakan, engrossed in reading his Stamboul newspaper, received them sullenly; but as Boghos Effendi was one of the most influential members of the Armenian community, he did not dare refuse the desired passport. He wrote down Archag's name and age, his weight and height, the color of his hair and eyes and even of the clothes he was to wear on the journey; then he made a note of all the places through which the lad would have to pass. Boghos Effendi willingly paid the two mejidiehs (about two dollars) for the precious paper, for at this period the Armenians were often refused passports and so were unable to travel at all; father and son kissed the pasha's hand, as a sign of submission, and made low bows as they withdrew. [57]

Archag spent the rest of the day with his sister and brother-in-law. Jousif hodja had studied at Aintab, and so was able to give the boy some good advice:

"Think yourself fortunate, my lad," said he, "to have the privilege of working with such men as Professor Pagratian and Professor Hagopian. Go to see Mrs. Spencer, the doctor's wife, now and then; she loves our people, and her example will stimulate you. And whatever any one may say to you, always remember with joy and pride that you are an Armenian."

"And our president!" asked Archag.

"Dr. Mills is a man of high attainments, and the college has made remarkable progress under his direction."

Nizam begged her brother to write often, to be a good boy and go to church regularly. Archag embraced his sister and brother-in-law with much feeling, and promised to do everything they wished.

His last meal at home was a sad one, for every one was silent and pre-occupied. Archag went to bed early but he did not sleep well; he kept waking up with a start, dreaming that he was late. At daybreak old Gulenia came to call him and he dressed quickly. He had hardly finished his breakfast when the tinkling of camels' bells was heard. [58]

"Archag Effendi, are you ready?" called an old Arab.

The lad's horse was waiting in the courtyard. Krikor had fastened our friend's boxes to the saddle, one on each side, and spread a mattress and blankets over the horse's back. Archag flung himself into the arms of his father and mother, then knelt to receive their blessing. He gave his brother a hug, called out a last good-by to the servants gathered in the courtyard, mounted his horse and settled himself very comfortably on the seat that Krikor had arranged. Again and again he looked back to wave his handkerchief, tears streaming down his cheeks.

His journey was long and difficult; the camels walked at a pace so exasperatingly slow, that Archag, worn out with fatigue, would fall asleep with his arms around his horse's neck. To avoid the heat, the caravan would start at daybreak and travel till noon, rest till three or four o'clock and then go on several miles farther. Each night was spent at an inn, where Archag could scarcely sleep at all for the vermin. When he was just falling into a doze, one of his companions [59]

would wake him up, saying that it was time to be off.

They passed through Bitlis and Marash, in turn. At last, one morning, as the caravan reached the crest of a hill, one of the Arabs pointed out to Archag a great city embowered in foliage, lying in the plain below. It was Aintab. Twenty-two days had passed since their departure from Van. The Mussulman showed his young protégé the principal buildings; the old half-ruined "kala" (fortress), the dome of the Gregorian Cathedral, the towers of the Franciscan church, the Mosque with needle-pointed minarets, the American Hospital, and finally the College, its façade in English style contrasting strangely with the native architecture of the other buildings. The camels, urged on by their drivers, quickened their pace, sniffing and uttering mournful cries. They made good time, and toward noon the caravan drew up at an inn where it was to stay for several days.

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Aintab contained at that time about sixty thousand inhabitants, twenty-five thousand of whom were Armenians. Mussulmans and Christians lived in separate quarters of the town, and had little intercourse with each other. The city lies in a fertile plain watered by a tributary of the Euphrates. The vine grows luxuriantly on the surrounding hills, producing grapes that are famous throughout the country. Aintab, being about seventy kilometers from a railway, has been very little affected by European civilization. The American Mission has established here, a hospital, a normal school for girls, and a college. The latter was founded in 1876 by Dr. Trowbridge, a Christian and an elect soul, removed, alas, too soon, from the field of his activity. At the time of which we are speaking, the college had two hundred students, forty of whom were resident pupils. It was well situated, on a hill overlooking the city and the plain.

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BENEATH THE CASTLE AT AINTAB

As soon as Archag had had his passport visé-ed, he set out for Central Turkey College. From a long distance he could see the great red brick building around which were grouped the houses of the president and professors. The campus was enclosed by a high wall. At the entrance, Archag had a moment's talk with the porter, then the heavy iron-barred gates turned on their hinges, and the lad went up the hill.

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Some boys at play in front of the school building looked with curiosity at the newcomer, and our friend went up to one of them and asked in Armenian if he could see Badvili (Pastor) Melikian, who was in charge of the resident students. The boy looked at him in some surprise, and replied in Turkish,² bidding Archag follow him.

The pastor was busy writing when the boys entered his office, but his kind face lighted up with a smile, and Archag at once felt drawn toward the good man. The badvili was perhaps about fifty years old, a small man, short and stout; a shock of gray hair escaped from the fez worn like a skull-cap on the back of his head, and every other minute he would try to push this head-covering straight, but the rebellious fez resumed its slanting position. After several years' pastoral work in Asia Minor, Mr. Melikian had been appointed Headmaster at Central Turkey College; here he found himself much more in his element than in his position of preacher, for he had a weakness for young people, and was much attached to this school where he had been one of the first pupils. He shook hands with Archag, and asked if he had had a good journey, enrolled him at once among the Sophomores, and assigned him a place in one of the dormitories.

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"We shall be together," said the other boy, whose name was Garabed.

"I'm very glad of that," said Archag, "for you are the only boy I know here."

Then the two boys went back to the play-ground where others joined them, and Archag soon found himself taking part in a lively conversation. They talked about the professors, the president and his wife, of what they had learned, and what they had yet to learn. Then all the Sophomores began playing ball, and kept up the game until they heard the bell ring for supper.

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Three tables were spread in the dining-hall; one for the preparatory class, the second for the Freshmen and Sophomores, and the third for the Juniors and Seniors. Archag sat down beside Garabed as Badvili Melikian was saying grace. The fare would no doubt have seemed very frugal to American boys; it consisted of tea, bread, and hard-boiled eggs, but the boys seemed to be satisfied; they dispatched their supper in ten minutes, and then went back to their play, as lessons had not yet begun.

Archag walked about arm in arm with Garabed, who told him his own story. He was a thin, frail-looking lad of seventeen; he had grown too fast, and was round-shouldered. His face was sweet and attractive, but unfortunately his expression was spoiled by a large pair of spectacles which made him look like a little old man. He was a native of Goerum, near Sivas, and had been two years at Aintab.

"I was glad to come back," he said, "for the professors are very nice, and the boys are fine chaps. My father wanted me to go to Marsivan, which is nearer home, but I preferred to return here."

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Archag took a liking to Garabed, and talked to him about Van and his family, as if he had been an old friend.

"Several of my relatives have been students here," he said, "that's why I came. My brother-in-law, who left four years ago, told me a good deal about the professors. Do you—"

Here the conversation was interrupted by the sudden appearance of another boy who jumped on Garabed's back, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

"Hi there, Baron³ Garabed! what stuff are you pouring into the ears of that innocent lamb!"

"I don't care to be compared to a lamb, thank you," said Archag; "they are too stupid."

"Aférim! (That's right) Baron Archag," said Garabed, "take Aram down a peg or two."

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The new comer, taking Archag by the arm, said to him:

"Come now, Garabed has been telling you all about the masters; let me draw the portrait of some of your classmates. First, the wise Garabed himself, who is the choicest specimen of my acquaintance (this is between ourselves). Over there you may see two embryo pastors," and he pointed to two stout, stocky boys chatting in a corner, "Soghomon (Solomon) and Boghos (Paul), the president's favorites; you may judge for yourself of his good taste. That tall boy, star-gazing, with his hands in his pockets, is a Junior by the name of Ghevont. The boy in European dress, going up to him, is Nejib Rossinian, the son of a doctor in Aleppo; he's in our class, and so is his cousin Dikran; they are an artful pair of

dogs, who are bound to make their way, though they don't always consider the means. To-morrow you will have to make the acquaintance of Samouil and Sumpad, whose brain isn't quite right, and the five Urfali (natives of Urfa) who always stick together like burrs. Finally, to complete the list of boarders, my humble self, Aram Nahabedian of Diarbekir, filling the position of clown and joker. There are a dozen day-scholars in our class, besides, but we only see them at recitations."

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Archag was laughing heartily; he was delighted with his two companions, and already felt himself among friends. At nine o'clock the bell called them in, and they said "Goodnight" to Badvili Melikian, who had a pleasant word for each, as they went upstairs to their dormitories. Archag was in the room with Aram, Garabed, Soghomon, Nejib and Sumpad. Aram and Nejib immediately began a pillow-fight, making a fearful commotion. Soghomon, the fat boy, half-buried beneath a mountain of pillows and coverlets, lay groaning and beseeching:

"Oh, I say! I'm smothered! 'Vaï! Vaï! I shall die!' who will take pity on me!"

Aram and Archag executed a wild dance about their victim, and the end of it was that Badvili Melikian was obliged to come and restore order. He lighted a night-lamp for the boys, for Armenians hate the dark. Once in bed, the boys went to sleep immediately, and before long came the sound of their regular breathing, together with Soghomon's snores.

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Archag was dreaming that the bells of the Cathedral of Van were calling him to Mass, when a shake roused him from his sleep. Aram was pulling him by the arm.

"Haïde, are you never going to wake up, you young mole? Do you think you're going to be allowed to sleep like that? You're as bad as Soghomon; he can't get out of bed."

Archag jumped up and dressed quickly; then the whole troop went down to breakfast. At half-past seven, professors and students all gathered in the chapel where Dr. Mills conducted morning prayers. He spoke to the boys of the child Samuel, urging them to imitate his love for the Lord.

"You come here," said he, "not only to receive your bachelor's degree, which you could get just as well at Constantinople or Damascus or Smyrna, but in order to become good and upright Christian men. We desire that these years of study may be blessed for you, and that later, when you are struggling with the difficulties of life, you may always remember gladly the days you have spent with us here."

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He spoke well, and Archag's heart was touched by his words. How many good resolutions he made then, together with his comrades! The course of our story will show whether or not he kept them.

When the speaker had finished, the boys stood up and sang one of their favorite hymns:

"Rab der bisé Kaimi kala
Fourtunada émin meldja.
Oi Kayanin Kavourhouna
Boulouroum her-den bir meldja."

"The Lord is our strong fortress,
A sure refuge in the storm,
Beside this Rock
I may always find a refuge."

The Sophomores were to begin their work in Natural Science on this morning. The course was given by Professor Pagratian, who was also proctor of their class.

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"It's sheer luck that we have him for proctor," said Aram to Archag. "He's a saint come out from his church, an angel descended from heaven. Do you know, he has an aureole about his head like Sourp Hagob (Saint James) in my prayer-book; that's why he never takes off his fez. Last year we had fat Piralian, who is as harsh as a Turkish pasha. He used to make us fail just for the pleasure of it; he teaches English, for he spent several years in Yankeestan.⁴ It was so cold down there his heart got frozen."

The arrival of the professor interrupted the flow of Aram's nonsense; he then began to draw a caricature of Mr. Piralian, "Yankee Doodle," as he called him.

Mr. Pagratian was a chilly little man, who kept his cloak wrapped about him in summer and winter. His face was partly hidden by a thick black beard, and a shabby old fez covered his meditative brow, but his luminous black eyes transformed him, banishing any thought of ridicule that might be suggested by his old-fashioned clothing. When these eyes, with their look of goodness, had once been fastened on one, they could never be forgotten. They laid bare one's soul, and seemed to expose one's bad thoughts only to drive them away and forgive them. And his voice—how it would thrill one, now stern and hard, now sweet and tender as that of a father talking with his child! He had a profound love for Natural History; his explanations were clear and interesting and the forty-five minutes in class passed all too quickly for Archag.

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Our friend next made the acquaintance of Professor Mahdesian, a reserved, scholarly man, who taught Armenian, and of Mr. Hagopian, the Professor of Turkish. The latter was the veteran of the college; he had been associated with Dr. Trowbridge in founding it thirty years before, devoting himself body and soul to his task. The beginnings had been difficult, partly from lack of funds, but he and the president had met the situation bravely, teaching nine hours a day. Success came; pupils flocked in from the most remote regions of the vast Turkish Empire. The courageous Dr. Trowbridge died before his time, but Professor Hagopian, more favored, was permitted to reap the ample harvest he had sown.

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English was the first lesson in the afternoon, and Archag was impatient to see the famous professor of whom Aram had had so much to say. Mr. Piralian was still very young. In order to make himself respected by his pupils he thought it necessary to treat them with an extreme severity, and would never let the slightest peccadillo pass unnoticed. The president often had to remonstrate with him on the subject of the frequent punishments which he inflicted on his pupils. He had spent several years in the United States, and had been a teacher there also. He had become accustomed to the ways of American children, who are notoriously "terrors," and now employed the same methods in dealing with the boys of Aintab that he had found useful with these others. Apart from that he was a capital teacher, and took an interest in his pupils, but he never let them see it.

From the first he was prejudiced against Archag; he had seen him walking about familiarly with Aram, for whom he had an actual antipathy; and that was enough to make him take a dislike to the new-comer. Then, Archag had learned English from a Scotchwoman, Miss Dobbie, who spoke broad Scotch, rolling her r's, aspirating her h's, and saying "auld" for "old." When he began to read, Professor Piralian made fun of his pronunciation, and asked him sarcastically what great professor had taught him English. But Archag, who fairly adored his old teacher, was wounded to the quick at hearing her made an object of ridicule.

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After their lessons, the Sophomores, glad of a chance to stretch their legs, went out to play football. They ran about, shouting and pushing each other, with their zoubouns tucked up in their girdles. Archag, after tripping up Soghomon and Garabed, seized the ball and threw it with all his might, but he aimed badly, and the ball went straight through one of the windows of Dr. Spencer's house. The glass fell in splinters, and Archag cried out in consternation.

"The only thing for you to do," said Garabed, "is to go and make your excuses to Mrs. Spencer; go right off now and do it."

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Archag was chagrined at his awkwardness, and reluctant to present himself before Mrs. Spencer, as a culprit. But the doctor's wife had seen the accident, and from behind a curtain she watched Archag coming toward the house, and observed his embarrassment. When he entered, and stammered out his apologies, she put him at his ease with a few friendly words:

"You have had a little misfortune, but that is nothing, and you will soon play better. Lessons are over, aren't they, so you can stay and have a cup of tea with me?"

She gave Archag great pleasure by beginning to talk about Van, which she had visited three years before. She inquired for Miss Dobbie, whose guest she had been for a week. Archag's spirits revived; he told a number of stories illustrating the old lady's untiring kindness, and Mrs. Spencer listened with interest. She liked the boy's frank countenance and vivacity, and when Archag left, he was completely won, and promised to come again often.

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¹ In Asia Minor every one has to go to the post-office to get his own mail. Before the Constitution, letters were more often lost than received at their destination. ↑

² Armenians of Aintab and throughout Cilicia speak Turkish; many do not even know Armenian. ↑

³ Baron: Mr. or Sir. The author has often been amused by the ceremonious politeness of Oriental school-boys. ↑

⁴ Stan, is Turkish for "Country," so Aram, in joking about America calls it "Yankee-stan." ↑

CHAPTER VI

A VISIT TO THE TURKISH BATH

Thursday was an important day in the Sophomore's calendar, for on that day Mihran hodja always took them to the hamam (bath). Garabed, Aram and Archag usually walked in front; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, as Dikran dubbed them. Archag, who was usually very sensitive, only laughed at this pleasantry, he was so happy with his two new friends. Garabed was really his favorite; to him he could confide his inmost thoughts, and tell his pleasures and his troubles, sure of finding pity and sympathy. Garabed was the eldest of eight children; one after another, he had seen all his brothers and sisters die, the victims of tuberculosis. These bereavements and the sadness that pervaded his home, had invested him with a certain melancholy which he had never been able to shake off entirely. His teachers found him too quick, I was almost going to say too wise, for his years. Archag, overflowing with life and spirits, occasionally found him depressing, and at such times he enjoyed the companionship of his other friend, with whom he could run, jump, and tussle to his heart's content for Aram was the life and soul of the class, and though his comrades might stand in fear of his raillery, they also admired his unwearied good nature and fearless courage.

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It was he, as usual, who took the lead in the conversation on this Thursday, and his friends were content to listen, and laugh at his sallies.

"Great news!" said he. "We are going to have a new professor of French."

"What?" cried Garabed. "Isn't President Mills going to teach us any more?"

"No."

"Well, then, who is this new teacher?" asked Archag.

"Guess."

"Mr. Hagopian?"

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"No."

"Mr. Pagratian?"

"Yok, yok (no, no)."

"Then I give up."

"Perhaps he is a Frenchman?" suggested Garabed.

"Bravo, my dear philosopher, you have guessed right; that is, he's a Swiss from Geneva. Dr. Mills spoke to my uncle about him, and he told me yesterday."

The three friends proceeded to share the news with their companions and they all entered the hamam in a state of great excitement. After undressing, the boys bound cloths about their loins, tied on bath-slippers, and passed into the "harara," a narrow room with temperature at white heat. Thanks to the exertions of the "abou saboun,"¹ who lathered and rubbed them thoroughly, they were soon perspiring freely. Aram, seeing everyone busy, took advantage of the situation to play a thousand pranks; now he pinched fat Soghomon, or again, took possession of all the soap. When the boys were all sufficiently red, they left the harara for the "hanefije," where they cooled themselves off with water made increasingly cold. Then they wrapped big sheets around them, twisted woolen bands about their heads, and returned to the "mashlach" (dressing-room). There they sat down in little groups on the divans, and began to play checkers and talk, at the same time disposing of a goodly number of cups of coffee.

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The hamam plays an important part in the life of Orientals; they go there for sanitary reasons, but still more for pleasure; it is really a place of recreation for them, just as the theater or concert-hall is for us.

Archag, Garabed and Samouïl were playing cards. Aram had mysteriously disappeared, and our two friends had asked Samouïl to take a hand with them. Samouïl, though quite fifteen years of age, looked barely thirteen. During the massacres of 1894 his parents and two older brothers had been killed by the Kurds, and the enemy had left him for dead beside the bodies of his relatives. A charitable person had taken and cared for him, and it was only by a miracle that his life was preserved; indeed, this life was rather a burden to him than otherwise, for he was pining away. A wound in the hip had left him lame, for the bone was affected. Dr. Spencer had operated, but the trouble had spread, making a second operation necessary. The poor boy knew quite well that he would not live to grow up, and he would speak of his going to heaven as we should allude to a railway journey. Mrs. Spencer was always doing something for him; she had placed him in the college, where masters and pupils alike loved him for his sweet nature.

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The game of cards was suddenly interrupted by angry cries:

“By the beard of my father, I’ll pay you for that!”

“And I’ll break every bone in your body!”

What had happened was this: Aram, bent on mischief as usual, had furtively stirred a big spoonful of powder into Dikran’s coffee; the latter had discovered the perpetrator of the trick and had given him two resounding slaps in the face; Aram hit back, but Nejib came to his cousin’s aid, and Aram could not cope with the two. Archag, seeing his friend attacked by two lusty opponents, ran to help him without stopping to find out what the quarrel was about; he pitched into Nejib and punched him in the chest and stomach while Aram struggled with Dikran. In a short time, Mihran hodja and the older boys succeeding in separating the combatants, but Aram’s nose was bleeding, Nejib had a black eye, and Archag and Dikran were covered with bruises. It took some time to quiet them down, for they were all shouting at once, without listening to what any one was saying. Aram was punished by two days on bounds; the others got off with a severe reprimand.

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On that same evening, the Sophomores were invited to a “sociable” at the house of President Mills. This invitation was a real event in the monotony of the college routine; the boys began to get ready quite two hours in advance. When they had completed their washing, shaving, shoe-polishing and prinking, they all started off in a body.

Mrs. Mills was waiting for them in her drawing-room. She was a pleasing and lively woman, not more than thirty years of age, and the boys were much attached to her. She was born at Aintab, and spoke both Turkish and Armenian like a native. It was she who was doing most of the talking now, although she was seconded in her efforts by another American lady, Miss Wylie, the directress of the Girls’ Normal School, a little person of uncertain age, dressed in red silk, with her hair cut short like a boy’s.

[82]

Archag, accustomed only to the simple dwellings of the interior of the country, was much impressed by the arm-chairs and pictures which gave the room an air of great luxury. He sat up very straight in a rocking-chair, not daring to move a muscle, and looked with envy at Aram, who was rocking away carelessly, as if he had been used to it all his life. Following Oriental custom, Archag had left his red leather slippers behind the door, while his companions had all worn shoes and kept them on. To add to his embarrassment, there was a great hole in one of his socks, and at his slightest movement his big toe would protrude. The other boys had put on European dress for the occasion, and his zouboun looked quite out of place in this grand drawing-room.

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“The very first time I go to town I must buy a European coat and pantaloons.” (he called them “bantaloons.”)

Suddenly, as he was talking to himself, he felt something cold tickling the soles of his feet. One bound took him into the middle of the room, but in his haste, unfortunately, he caught at a table-scarf, dragging it off, together with a handsome jardinière which fell, broken into a thousand fragments.

“The clumsy boy!” said the president under his breath.

Mrs. Mills was in dismay; she thought of all the trouble she had had in bringing this ornament to Aintab on her last journey back from America; it was a present from her brother, besides, and there it was, all broken to bits by the clumsiness of a country lad.

Archag stood staring vacantly, his ears tingling, until Mrs. Mills took pity on him

and told him he need not feel so badly about it; an accident might happen to any one. But Archag made no reply; he had not heard a word she said.

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Mrs. Mills made a gesture of impatience: she thought the boy very ill-bred, and that he might at least have offered some apology. If she had observed him a little more closely she would probably have changed her opinion. In order to enliven the company and make a little diversion, she sat down at the piano and asked Garabed and Dikran to accompany her. The boys always took their mandolins with them when they were invited to the president's house, for it was a great pleasure for them to play with Mrs. Mills.

At nine o'clock, tea and sweetmeats were served, and then the boys took their leave, after thanking their hosts for their kindness.

Then Garabed tried to console Archag:

"I say, whatever got into you? I didn't see what happened."

"Well, if you were ticklish, and somebody began to scratch the soles of your feet with a pen-knife, I guess you would jump, just like me."

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"I wonder who could have played that trick on you?"

"I don't know, and what good would it do if I did? The mischief is done."

But now Aram had joined them: "Listen, Archag," he said resolutely. "It's all my fault, and I assure you on my honor I'm broken-hearted over it. You know how I love to play tricks. Well, when I saw you with your legs holding on to the chair like cork-screws, I couldn't resist the temptation to make them change their position, but I never dreamed of causing such an accident. I let you come away first, so I might speak to Mrs. Mills, and I owned up to her. And now I have an idea: we'll go and buy a pretty table-cover, you and I, and send it to her; then she will understand that we are doing what we can to make up for our stupidity."

Archag clapped his hands:

"Yes, that's a fine idea, and we'll put on the outside: 'From Aram and Archag, in memory of their awkwardness.' I was very angry with you for a minute, but now I forgive you with all my heart; you just wanted to tease me, but as for me, I have been too awkward for words."

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He held out his hand to Aram, who gripped it again and again.

A few days after this, Mrs. Mills showed her husband a charming table-cover of white silk, embroidered with arabesques, and handed him a note.

The president read it.

"Do you know," said he, "this boy from Van is a perfect puzzle to me. First he is awkward as he can be, breaks your jardinière, and never offers a single word of apology; then here comes this present, which shows a delicacy of feeling rare in a boy of his age."

"He is exceptionally shy; but I believe there is good stuff in Archag, and that we shall make something of him. Mrs. Spencer has spoken to me of him very favorably, and you know how accurate her judgment is."

"Yes, yes; only don't spoil him for me by flattery and kind attentions."

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¹ Abou saboun, the "soap-father," the name given to an attendant at the hamam, whose duty it is to soap the frequenters of the bath. ↑

CHAPTER VII

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ARCHAG'S FIRST TROUSERS

For several weeks the boys talked of nothing but the arrival of Monsieur Bernier, their future French teacher. One morning the president received a telegram from Aleppo announcing the arrival of the young man that same evening, and by way of doing him honor, Dr. Mills gave all the classes a half-holiday. The Sophomores were talking of their new professor:

"I wonder if he's young or old," said Samouil.

"You little fool," muttered Dikran, "you may depend upon it that no man of experience would leave Europe to come out and bury himself in a hole like this; I bet he's a greenhorn with just five hairs on his chin."

"I've seen his photograph," announced Aram, with the air of a judge revealing a state secret.

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A dozen voices cried out at once:

"What is he like? What is he like?"

Aram straightened up with an air of importance:

"This morning I was in the president's office to show him the *pensum* he gave me yesterday; I was looking around at his books and his desk, and there I stopped, as I noticed a photograph half hidden by a pile of letters. I peeped, I stood on tiptoe, but couldn't manage to see a thing. All at once Mrs. Mills called out, 'Dearie, come and get a piece of cake.' Dearie didn't wait to be called twice. 'Wait here for me a moment,' said he, 'some one is calling me,' and as soon as he had closed the door I pounced on the photograph. It was the picture of a nice, slender young man, and he had written at the top: Henri Bernier. I had barely time to put it back before the president came back."

The boys quite envied Aram for having seen the new master before his arrival, and since they had the afternoon free they decided to go out and meet him in a body. Aram was the only dissenter:

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"Oh, no! I shan't go; I shall see him soon enough. I haven't time, anyhow; Garabed and I are going to town with Archag to help him choose a suit of clothes."

"Do you hear that?" whispered Dikran in his cousin's ear. "The young savage is getting civilized; not a bad idea. He won't disgrace us all, next time we are invited to the president's house."

Aram and his two friends went to ask Badvili Melikian for passes (the boys were not allowed to leave the campus without a written permission); then they went off whistling, on their way to the bazaar.

First they went into a haberdasher's shop to buy stiff collars and a necktie.

The shopkeeper showed them a box containing a dozen cravats of every color of the rainbow, and the three boys stood hesitating before such magnificence. Aram recommended an apple-green tie and one of cherry-red, by turns.

"The green one," he said, "is very distingué; but Dikran has a red one that his brother brought home from Beyrout, and he's just stuck on it. He declares you can't find anything like it here; it will be an awful blow to him if you buy one."

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Archag, a modern Paris, confronted by the beauties of the cravats, underwent all the torments of indecision. Finally Garabed, who had said nothing, jogged his elbow:

"If I were you, I should take this pale blue one, then you will be wearing the Armenian color," and he pointed to a cravat of coarse silk and cotton.

Before the beauty of this sky-blue tie, the charms of the two others paled.

"It's that or none," said Archag to himself.

But unfortunately, the shopkeeper asked a mejidieh (ninety cents) for it, a fabulous price for a necktie. The three boys simultaneously uttered cries of indignation, and turned to leave the shop.

"Eh, lá, lá, Effendis, not so fast! How much do you offer me?" It was now the shopkeeper's turn to be alarmed.

"Twelve piastres (fifty-three cents)," said Archag.

"Twelve piastres! you wish to ruin me then? A cravat that comes straight from Vienna, and cost me three piastres duty! I will let you have it for eighteen piastres."

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Again a pretended exit of the shoppers.

Finally, after twenty minutes of haggling and excited talk, Archag got his famous

necktie for fifteen piastres, and our three friends left the shop radiant, escorted by the merchant, cringing and bowing repeatedly.

“Good business!” he said to himself, as soon as their backs were turned. “I have had that ugly old rag in the shop for two years, and never expected to get rid of it at such a price.”

The tailor’s shop was only a few steps away. Archag, acting on his friend’s advice, bought a suit of serge. He tried it on at once, and then looked at himself in a mirror, surveying with great satisfaction his slender figure, his snow-white collar and blue cravat, and as a finishing touch, a scarf-pin in the shape of a four-leaf clover, the gift of his two friends. The merchant, his clerks, Garabed and Aram all declared that the suit fitted him like a glove.

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Archag, however, felt very much hampered by his trousers, which hit against his legs at every step; his suspenders pulled, and his stiff collar choked him, and he gave a sigh of envy as he looked at his flannel robe lying on a chair. But he paid his bill of two pounds and a half, took his zouboun on his arm, and went back to college with his companions.



THE ARABA

A party of students had gone out to meet Monsieur Bernier, and the others were waiting for him on the campus. About fifteen minutes after Archag and his friends had rejoined their mates, the sound of a carriage was heard in the distance. “They are coming, they are coming!” called a voice, and they all ran to the foot of the hill. Dr. Mills and Dr. Spencer, on horseback, were at the head of the party; the boys, a few of them on bicycles, the greater number on donkeys or walking, were crowding about the araba, a peculiar sort of Turkish carriage used by travelers in the interior of Asia Minor. It is a wagon without springs, having a hood of gray cloth; trunks are fastened on anywhere, underneath, or at the sides of the vehicle. The traveler lies on a mattress; he has a basket of provisions at hand, in which he is likely to forage very often, to beguile the length of the journey. Consider, dear reader, that the carriage-roads in Turkey are often little better than country lanes, that it is sometimes necessary to drive across rivers and marshes, or again, to follow rough, stony roads, and run the risk of being attacked by brigands, and you will realize that a journey in an araba is no

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pleasure trip. Monsieur Bernier had come from Alexandretta, and had spent three days in his araba; he had been obliged to stay each night at a khan, where he had been almost devoured by vermin; it was therefore a great relief to him to find himself at last at his journey's end.

As he got out of the araba he was hailed with shouts of welcome by the boys:

"Hip, hip, hip, ra, ra, ra, hip ra ré, bomba, bomba, C. T. C. (Central Turkey College)."

The boys of Aintab being students in an American institution, had adopted the American college custom of having their own peculiar yell. [96]

Monsieur Bernier had a passion for travel, and after pocketing his university diploma, had set out for distant lands. He was very young, so young that some of his own pupils, great bearded fellows of twenty, looked older than he. He thanked the boys for their kind reception, and then followed President Mills to the house in which he was to live. For a long time he could hear from his room the "hip, hip, hip, ra, ra, ra," shouted in his honor, and these expressions of welcome so cheered him up that from that first evening he felt a warm attachment for his pupils, which never altered.

That evening, the Sophomores were in their study-hall as usual, in charge of Mihran hodja, but as they had had a holiday in the afternoon, they were free to do as they pleased. Most of them were reading. Archag, Aram, and two of the Urfali were playing chess. Archag kept losing, and after a while gave up, tired of his bad luck.

"I've had enough of that," said he; "ask Samouïl to take my place." Samouïl agreed; he was a good player, but he found a formidable opponent in Aram, and the group soon became very much excited. Archag watched them for a moment, then went off to chat with Garabed in another corner of the room. Nejib was sitting near them, absorbed in a book. [97]

"Hi, there," said Archag, "what are you buried in so deep? You haven't taken your eyes off your old book for the last hour."

He drew near without ceremony, and read out the title of the book at the top of his voice: "The Arabian Nights!"

If a thunderbolt had fallen in the hall the boys could hardly have been more startled; they knew how severe Dr. Mills was upon any who read improper stories; and "The Arabian Nights" had a terrible reputation at Aintab.

Profound silence followed Archag's imprudent words; the boys dared not breathe a syllable. Mihran hodja turned pale, went to Nejib and asked for his book. The boy handed it to him without a word, but he was as white as a ghost. The master turned over the leaves, hoping the book might prove to be an expurgated edition, put it in his pocket with a sigh, and left the room. When he had closed the door, Nejib flung himself upon Archag and gave him a vigorous box on the ear. [98]

Our friend tripped him up, and when his opponent was on the floor, punched his chest. The boys had hard work to separate them, for they were both very angry.

"As if I knew 'The Arabian Nights' was a forbidden book!" said Archag. "I simply asked him what he was reading. Don't be worried; I shan't speak another word to him."

Nejib, for his part, insisted that Archag had done it on purpose, that he was a spy and ought to be expelled from college.

Finally, peace was restored after a fashion. Archag's anger cooled quickly, and he thought no more about the matter. But Nejib did not forget. President Mills gave him a punishment of three days on bounds, on bread and water, together with a very bad conduct mark, and also wrote a letter of complaint to Dr. Rossinian. The young fellow, who was quarrelsome by nature, then merely waited for an opportunity to take his revenge. [99] [100]

AN ACCIDENT

Archag worked at his lessons with enthusiasm, and the days and weeks passed very quickly. Most of the professors admired his earnestness and intelligence, and were pleased with the progress he made, but unfortunately he had failed to win the favor of Mr. Piralian, who continued to dislike him. It must be confessed that Archag showed little interest in his English lessons; he had never been willing to alter his pronunciation, for he considered Miss Dobbie an excellent teacher, and since she said "auld" and "gir-r-l", of course that must be right. Therefore, he argued, Professor Piralian was in the wrong and spoke incorrectly; he did not know how to teach, and it was not worth while to work very hard. Our friend thus drew a quantity of false conclusions, with the superb recklessness of youth. In his Christmas reports he was marked "good," and "very good" in everything except English, in which he had only "medium"; but this made very little impression upon him; he knew that he had not done good work, and did not expect anything better. Garabed stood first in the class, then came Dikran and Archag. Aram was fifth. Nejib, who had always been among the first, stood only eighth because of his bad conduct mark.

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The advent of the Christmas holidays was, of course, hailed by the boys with shouts of joy. What great games they would play! What a jolly time they were going to have during those two weeks! On New Year's Day, the Sophomores were invited to the house of Hosep Paelian, one of the day pupils, and they had a delightful time with him.

They were constantly going to the bazaar to do their Christmas shopping, and returning surrounded with an air of mystery, bringing big parcels which they hid in their trunks.

At this point I hear my readers exclaim, "What! Christmas after New Year's Day? The world must certainly be upside-down over there!"

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It does indeed seem odd to us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in the month of January. But the Gregorians use the Greek calendar, which is twelve days later than ours. They keep Christmas on the Feast of the Three Kings, the sixth day of January, that is, the eighteenth, New Style.

President Mills had a pine tree brought from Amanus, a mountain to the west of Aintab. For several days the sun was hidden by snow-storms, and this Oriental Christmas differed little from the same season in the North. In the afternoon of Christmas Day, Professor Pagratian conducted a service in the college chapel, after which masters and pupils gathered together for dinner in the great dining-room.

The menu consisted of turkey with chestnuts, and a dessert of grapes and oranges. The boys were little used to delicacies, especially to meat, and their eyes shone with eagerness in anticipation of this feast of good things. The professors were seated at different tables; Mihran hodja and Monsieur Bernier sat with the Sophomores, one at either end of the table. The young Swiss smiled as he looked at his plate, on which were large slices of turkey, pilaaf (rice), and chestnuts, arranged in the form of a tower. Oriental usage requires that the plates be filled to the extent of their capacity, but it is very bad form not to leave a considerable part of what has been given, or one is set down as a gourmand.

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Monsieur Bernier was preparing to do justice to his dinner when he observed that he had neither knife nor fork. Supposing it to be a mere oversight, he asked Garabed to get him a knife. After quite five minutes the boy returned in some embarrassment, saying he could not find one. Aram then offered his pen-knife, which, boy-fashion, he was in the habit of using for all sorts of purposes; Monsieur Bernier recalled having seen him digging in the earth with this same knife a few days before, and considered it more hygienic to decline the offer. He noticed how his companions rolled up their meat in the soft, thin bread, using a spoon for the rice and chestnuts, so he did the same, to the great delight of the boys.

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The tree had been lighted in the study hall; the Seniors had decorated it with cotton-wool, oranges, apples and gilded nuts, and had laid out the presents on tables. The boys sang a hymn in English; then they made haste to open their parcels, and before long every one was engrossed with his own gifts. Archag received one Turkish pound (about four dollars and a half) from his parents, a book from his sister and another from Garabed, and Aram's photograph. Dikran was manipulating a microscope which his brother had sent him from New York. Boghos had a kodak from America, which he was showing with pride to his friend Soghomon. No one had been forgotten; for the less fortunate boys whose parents had not been able to send them anything, Mrs. Mills had provided

remembrances. After all the presents had been duly admired, the boys put them aside, to play games. At ten o'clock, tea and caghkés (little cakes) were served, and at length the boys went off to their dormitories, very happy after their festival.

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The next day, the weather was so cold that every one stayed indoors, and Archag, after reading a little while, took a fancy to go upstairs to the museum, which contained good specimens of the flora and fauna of the country.

He spent a long time looking at the different collections of plants, the stuffed birds and the shells; but when that was finished, he did not know what to do with himself. What was there to do, all the rest of the afternoon? As his eyes wandered about the room, they fell on a cabinet standing partly open. He went up to it, and pushing back the door, saw that it contained some rare objects: some insects and Professor Piralian's collection of butterflies. This worthy man had a mania for collecting; he had hunted for stones, fossils, butterflies and antique coins, by turns; at present he was asking every one for postage-stamps, which he carefully pasted in a new album. His collection of butterflies included some superb specimens which he had caught himself during a stay in Mexico. On his return to Aintab he had presented the collection to the college, where it was highly appreciated.

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As the thermometer registered several degrees below zero, the furnace fire was burning at full blast, and the air in the museum, already impregnated with camphor and naphtha, was suffocating. Before long, Archag's head was burning; he threw open one of the windows near the door, and took a good breath of fresh air. Then he returned to the cabinet and took out a glass box containing the finest specimen of the Piralian collection. It was beginning to grow dark, so he took the box to the window, which he had left open. He stood looking at the marvelous insects with their iridescent wings of blue and green and gold, and was amusing himself by trying to decipher the Latin names, when he felt a smart blow on his arm. The force of the sudden jar made him let go of the box, and down it fell with a crash, on the stone pavement of the courtyard. For an instant Archag stood motionless with fright; then he rushed into the corridor, where he heard a sound of retreating footsteps. He went back to the museum, and looking from the window he could see the shapeless fragments of the box down below. A ray of hope flashed across his mind; could it be, perhaps, that the precious insects had not been injured?

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Running downstairs two steps at a time, the next moment he was in the courtyard. Alas! the butterflies were ruined; most of them were reduced to powder. In the face of this disaster Archag felt powerless, constrained by an agony of fear. He could not bring himself to think of the thing he ought to do, to go at once to Professor Piralian and tell him frankly what had happened. His only thought was that he should be expelled from the college. How dreadful, oh, how very dreadful!

When he entered the schoolroom, he was so pale that Garabed was frightened:

"Why, what is the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"I have a bad headache."

He took up a book, but the words danced before his eyes, without conveying the slightest meaning to his mind.

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Garabed, seeing that he did not want to talk, asked no more questions. Every time the door was opened, the culprit trembled: now, his misdeed had been discovered, he thought, and some one was coming to question the boys. His heart beat like a trip-hammer, and he felt as if he must suffocate. The evening passed without any disturbance, but Archag had a restless night; he kept dreaming that he had been sent away in disgrace, and his classmates' shouts of derisive laughter seemed to ring in his ears. Several times he woke up with a start, to hear Garabed anxiously asking if he were ill, and if he would like to have Badvili Melikian called. He would reply impatiently that he did not need anything, and turn over on the other side.

The next morning, Dr. Mills came into the schoolroom before prayers, looking very grave.

"Now for it!" said Archag to himself.

The president told them what had happened, and made the misdeed appear very disgraceful. When he called on the guilty one to come forward and acknowledge his fault, our friend rose mechanically and went to the desk.

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"It was I who did it," he said simply.

"You! you!" repeated Dr. Mills. "A boy whom we have all loved! How can you have done a thing like that? It can't be possible!"

However, he led the culprit away to his office, and questioned him closely. Archag confessed to opening the cabinet and taking the box of butterflies to the window in order to see them better, but when he said that some one had pushed him, his judge smiled incredulously. He called Badvili Melikian, who assured him that, with the exception of Nejib who was in the city, none of the Sophomores had left the study-hall that afternoon.

Archag had always been on good terms with his classmates, and it seemed impossible that any one of them should have wanted to play him such a trick. Dr. Mills questioned the boys again, but each gave the same reply: not one of them had gone up to the museum that day. Indeed, the president asked these questions merely to satisfy his own conscience; he was quite convinced of Archag's guilt. Professor Piralian had often complained of his bad conduct and lack of application; he had just given him a "medium" mark in English. It seemed therefore quite probable that Archag had deliberately taken revenge on his teacher by destroying his collection. [110]

All the professors assembled in the president's room to talk the matter over, and Dr. Mills laid Archag's case before them at some length, and then waited for their counsel. A painful silence followed; Armenians hate to give an opinion outright; they prefer to evade the main question, and to prolong their discussions without coming to any decision.

At last Professor Pagratian rose and addressed the president:

"I must say, that for my part, I have always found Archag loyal and truthful." A murmur of assent was heard from the other masters. "I have watched him both in and out of study-hours, and it is my private opinion that one of his classmates really did give him a push by way of revenge. I have my own suspicions, too, as to that, which I shall do my utmost to verify. The lad is diffident and awkward; he did wrong not to confess his fault at once, but he made up for that by admitting his guilt before the whole college. You will reply that he could not do otherwise, since Badvili Melikian knew he was in the museum that afternoon. I do not admit that argument; if he had meant to lie about it all, he would have denied the whole or nothing. Let us punish him for his disobedience in handling the collection; that was his only fault, and does not deserve expulsion from the college." [111]

The professors discussed the matter at length; Monsieur Bernier and Badvili Melikian agreed with Professor Pagratian; the others wished Archag to be expelled.

"I don't believe," said the president, at last, "that we shall ever come to an agreement. I suggest therefore that we leave the decision to Professor Piralian, who is better able to judge than we."

The professor had received a grievous blow in the destruction of his precious collection, and he had none too much sympathy with Archag. But at the moment of giving his judgment he seemed to see his pupil's bright face with its frank and straightforward expression, and he felt that eyes like his could not have lied. His decision was made. [112]

"Gentlemen," said he, "I ask you to keep Archag here; five days on bounds will be sufficient punishment for him."

Meanwhile our friend was wandering about the campus like a lost soul. He had gone off by himself, ashamed to let his grief be seen. Was he really going to be expelled? All his pride revolted at the thought. He would cheerfully take any punishment if only he might be spared this disgrace.

After a while he heard someone calling him:

"Archag, Archag!"

"What is it?"

"Dr. Mills is asking for you."

Archag entered the room where all the professors were seated around the table.

"My friend," said the president to him, "you have committed a serious fault in touching the collection of butterflies after having been told not to do so. The loss you have occasioned to our museum is irreparable. We are willing, however, to take into consideration your youth and inexperience, as extenuating [113]

circumstances, since you are just at the beginning of your college career. You will have five days on bounds, and be marked zero for conduct in your next report."

"Then I am not expelled?"

"No; we think you are sufficiently punished in this way."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, Machallah!" cried Archag. He kissed the president's hand again and again, then fled precipitately to hide the sobs that stifled him.

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CHAPTER IX

FRIENDS IN NEED

After the affair of the butterflies, the Sophomores held themselves somewhat aloof from Archag, for they could not forgive him for saying that one of them had pushed him. They all felt insulted by this accusation, and believed him to be a hypocrite and a liar. One day, when Archag was about to join a group at cards, Dikran got up, refusing to play with him. Garabed was the only one who remained unchanged; he was firmly persuaded of his friend's innocence, and was always ready to cheer him up with a kind word or look of sympathy. And indeed, Archag had need of it; he felt terribly isolated, and was hurt by the silent condemnation of his classmates and some of the professors. Up to this time he had been petted and flattered by every one; now, fallen thus abruptly from his pedestal, he could not accustom himself to his unhappy circumstances.

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"You look like a ghost," said Aram.

He believed Archag to be innocent, and pitied him sincerely, but was beginning to be bored by his friend's depression. Archag had had a large share in all his pranks and games, but this pale lad who could neither laugh nor joke was not his old Archag at all, and Aram insensibly began to drift away from him. Two of the Urfali became his special cronies, for with them he could play all sorts of pranks. Archag observed this change with bitterness of spirit, but he was too proud to tell Aram the whole story. He fancied that every one except Garabed despised him. He had never ventured to go and see Mrs. Spencer again; whenever he saw her at a distance he would go out of his way to avoid her. One day, however, as he was returning from the bazaar, he saw her suddenly at a street corner. For an instant he thought of turning back: but that would have been cowardly; and he kept on his way. The missionary's wife had, of course, observed his small artifices; she herself had never believed him guilty, and was glad of this opportunity to speak an encouraging word to him.

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Archag touched his fez by way of salutation, and was about to pass on, but Mrs. Spencer stopped him.

"I was just wondering what had become of you; it is a long time since I have seen you. I am going to the hospital, and you must walk on a little way with me; you will tell me what is weighing on your heart, won't you?"

Archag could not refuse; his questioner looked at him with such a kind smile.

"You have had a hard trial," she continued, "but still, you mustn't lose courage; you will see that everything will be cleared up by and by; as for me, I have never believed you guilty of a falsehood. Don't let yourself be crushed by misfortune; this is probably your first experience. Ah, well! Bear it like a man. Redouble your efforts to do away with the bad impression you have made on some of your teachers; above all, show yourself obedient and docile toward Professor Piralian; make an extra effort to please him."

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"He hates me," Archag could not help saying, "he shows it in all sorts of ways."

"What nonsense you are talking! If he had hated you, would he have asked Dr. Mills to let you stay here? You have him to thank for not being expelled."

Archag was dumb with astonishment; the iron vise which had gripped his heart for the last three weeks, was relaxing its hold; he was finding once more a little of that sympathy in which he had no longer dared to believe. With a lighter heart he took leave of the doctor's wife, and went back to the college whistling.

"You are entirely changed," said Garabed on his return; "what has come over you?"

"I'm happy to-day." And he told his friend about the conversation with Mrs. Spencer.

"You see," replied Garabed, "the best people have kept their friendship for you."

Professor Pagratian also took a great interest in Archag, and often invited him to his house with Garabed. What happy evenings those were for our two friends! Mrs. Pagratian and her two daughters would mend a great pile of linen, while the professor smoked his narguileh, and talked about his youthful days of poverty and hardship. He did not remember his father; the eldest of six children, he had been obliged to go to work while still very young, in order to help his mother. At the age of eighteen he was a journeyman weaver, earning a mejidié (ninety cents) a week. An American missionary whom he met occasionally, gave him a copy of the New Testament, and he used to read it privately with a companion of his named Krikorian. The Epistles of Saint Paul made a deep impression upon these young men, and then Dr. Trowbridge became interested in the two friends, and used to pray with them and explain the Holy Scriptures.

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"When he talked to us," said the professor, "it was as if scales fell from our eyes; we felt a horror of our sins, and a thirst for truth and righteousness.... One Christmas evening when Krikorian and I had been praying with more than ordinary fervor, we seemed to hear Jesus Christ calling us. Our hearts leaped for joy; that was the most beautiful day of our life, and we always think of it with tears of gratitude. Dr. Trowbridge was at that time engaged in laying the foundations of the college, and he proposed that we should fit ourselves to become teachers in his school. I needn't tell you how glad we were to act on his suggestion. We spent four years in America, and then we returned to work with our benefactor. Alas! God called him suddenly to Himself. Such men are rare indeed, and his death was a very great loss to Aintab."

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These talks made a deep impression on Archag. He had always supposed that it would be time enough to think about religion when he was grown up. But his teacher had been less than twenty years old when the Spirit of Christ took possession of his whole being, soul and body; and how happy he seemed!

Sometimes Mrs. Pagratian (whose mother was German), and her daughters, would sing old songs in the dialect of Swabia, or perhaps Monsieur Bernier would join the little group, and talk about Switzerland, a country well-known to the Pagratians, for the professor had studied for two years at Basle, and preferred the Swiss country to America.

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"In Switzerland," he would say, "the people enjoy life; in America they do business."

When Monsieur Bernier spoke of the liberty of his compatriots, the poor Armenians could not suppress a sigh of envy, and Mrs. Pagratian would wipe away a secret tear, for she lived in constant dread of a fresh massacre.

These evenings were a blessed influence for Archag; he threw himself into his work with new ardor.

"Something seems to have changed that boy entirely," said Mr. Piralian to Professor Pagratian. "I never could do anything with him before, but since that famous affair of the butterflies he has grown polite, studious, and attentive in class, whereas formerly he was always thinking about something else. I actually believe I shall succeed in correcting his horrible accent."

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"That would almost make up for the loss of your collection," replied his colleague, laughing.

"Yes; only if I had to gain the progress of each of my pupils at the cost of one of my collections, I should soon be ruined!"

Archag, for his part, saw that Mr. Piralian no longer retained his former prejudice against him, and he even came to like the English lessons. His classmates, seeing that he was reinstated in the good graces of the masters, left off tormenting him. But Archag still avoided them; he was constantly with Garabed; they prepared their lessons together, and then went off on long walks, exchanging ideas about every subject that came into their heads. But their favorite topic of conversation was Armenia, so cruelly oppressed and tried.

Archag had never thought very much about his country. He loved it, to be sure, and pitied it, but that was all. Garabed, who was older and more reflective by nature, made him feel ashamed of his ignorance. He showed him Armenia,

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wasted by continual massacres, but yet alive; he described the deplorable condition of their fellow-countrymen, the better and more intelligent of whom had fled to America; he told him the story of the heroic siege of Zeitoun—how the town held out for seven months against the Turkish forces which had come to exterminate it; or again, of the great achievements of Andranick¹ the revolutionary leader, who had dared resist the Kurds, and had been victorious.

Archag's eyes were opened; as his love of country increased, it became the central force in his life. Together the two boys studied the history of their country, and took pleasure in speaking Armenian, although Garabed insisted that they must always speak Turkish in the presence of the other boys. The reason for this we shall see presently.

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¹ Andranick, a popular hero of song and story, and a revolutionary leader in Armenia for the past thirty years. During the Great War, he organized Armenian troops and led them against the Turks. Knowing the topography of the country so well, his troops were always in the advance parties of the Russians with whom they were fighting. Andranick was commissioned Major-General by the Russians and was six times decorated by them for gallantry. He rescued and cared for thousands of Armenian refugees, who clung to his army for months for protection; though they impeded his progress, he could not forsake them. His career has been one of remarkable romance and adventure. At the present time, January, 1920, it is said that he is the only person on whose head the Turks have set a price.

It is interesting to know that the hero of Archag and Aram is a real person of flesh and blood, and has recently been here in the United States. He came as a member of the Armenian Military Mission to plead with the American Government for help for stricken Armenia, asking for military, financial and economic assistance, that his people might be enabled to help themselves in the future.

An article about Andranick, with a photograph, appeared in the New York *Evening Post*, November 29, 1919. ↑

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CHAPTER X

THE ARMENIAN NATION

On half-holidays the boys were in the habit of going to town, to shop or to visit their friends, and on a certain Saturday, in the month of February, they had all gone off in various groups, and the college was deserted. Garabed and Archag took advantage of the warm spring sunshine to climb one of the hills which rise above the city toward the south. Here, seated on a tombstone—these hills are covered with graves—they ate their frugal luncheon of bread and cheese and olives, and when they had finished, Garabed wiped his oily fingers, and drew from his zouboun a book wrapped in newspaper.

"What have you got there?" asked Archag.

"Djelaladdin!"

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Archag clapped his hands:

"Oh, Garabed, how splendid! How did you ever get hold of it? I've been nearly wild myself, thinking I could never get a chance to read our great Raffi."¹

"Yes, the book has been forbidden by our Padishah (sultan) on pain of imprisonment for life, and if Dr. Mills were to know that you had read it, he would send you packing this very day. Are you surprised? You see Dr. Mills has had to take oath before the Vali (governor) that he will not disseminate the new ideas among us. Ali Pasha keeps watch, and if he should ever discover that our college was a center of liberalism he would close it the very next day. Now our president knows that, and he is very careful."

"But how did you manage to get this Raffi?"

"Ghevont lent it to me this morning."

Garabed turned the pages of the old book affectionately; its leaves were yellow and stained.

"Listen to this passage, where Sarkat, returning from the towns, finds his own village in flames: 'After a march of several hours he perceived a red light in the distance, becoming alternately brighter and fainter; now shooting up in writhing

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flames, now motionless, the stream of fire, fed by fresh fuel, spreading farther and farther.' And this other bit: 'When,' thought he, 'the lamb is obliged to live near the wolf, it must try to make wolf's teeth of its own, that it may not become the other's prey.'"

Archag listened eagerly to these words.

"Yes, Sarkat is right," said he. "Why don't we defend ourselves? Why don't we make a struggle for our independence? Look at the Serbians, the Bulgarians, the Greeks; they have been fighting the Turks for years; Europe has been thrilled with joy at the noble deeds of Canaris, and Kolokotronis and Botsaris,² and at last sent effective aid to the Hellenes. Let us do the same."

"But our people are ignorant, and stagnating in servitude; few of them know the use of arms."

"Then they must be taught, and supplied with arms."

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"Who will do that?"

"We, the young men, who have the strength and the faith for it."

"Ah, my dear friend! I knew you would say that!" and Garabed grasped his hand warmly.... "You are worthy of becoming one of us. Listen: other men have had your thoughts. They have longed to arouse our people from their lethargy, to teach them their duty and their value, so that when the accursed Kurd shall sound the tocsin for fresh massacres, we shall not be taken unaware as formerly, but be ready to conquer or die. Secret societies have been formed; revolutionary groups have been organized in our towns, and they get recruits among all classes of society. You will find fédaï (revolutionaries) in the bazaar, in the fields, even in the serail, and in our schools."

"In our college? It can't be possible!"



A MOTHER AND HER CHILDREN

"It's a fact, though, and you can understand how cautious we have had to be, to keep from being discovered. It has been so hard for me not to speak of it to you, my best friend, but our chief forbade it; to-day he has given me leave, and I'm going to ask you to join our group of fédaï."

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"With all my heart, my dear Garabed, and as soon as possible."

"Pek-et (very well), we shall admit you this evening."

“What time?”

“Wait for me at half-past eight, and we’ll go out together.”

Archag was full of enthusiasm; he felt that he had become a man, and a worker for the good of his country. He hid the book under his zouboun, and the two friends went down the hill, and made their way back to the college.

During study-hour Archag looked at the clock very often; he had equations to solve, but the work did not go on well, for all the time he was thinking over what Garabed had said. At last he closed his copy-book in vexation, counting on finishing his task in the morning. It was only eight o’clock, and he opened his English reading-book for the sake of appearances, for Badvili Melikian had spoken to him several times already. At last the clock struck the half-hour. The boys always had an hour for recreation before going to bed, and most of them went to the library to read the newspapers and the American magazines. Archag and Garabed ran downstairs to the hall where Ghevont, president of the fédaï, was waiting for them. He was a silent, reserved boy, but very intelligent, and always among the first in his class. He came from Brousa, had lived in Cyprus and Jerusalem, and was considered a person of consequence by his fellow students, because of his numerous journeys by ship and rail.

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The three boys went out of the building without saying a word. They went toward the enclosure at the end of the campus, which was the burial-place of missionaries who had died at Aintab, and there they sat down on an old tombstone which had fallen over during the winter. Garabed kept watch, while Ghevont read to Archag the demands of the society:

1. Political and economic liberty, based on local autonomy and federated ties, as the inherent right of an integral part of the Ottoman Empire.
2. Liberty of conscience, of speech, of the press, and of assembly and association.
3. Separation of Church and State.
4. Absolute equality of all nationalities and all religious organizations.
5. Inviolability of the individual, of the home, and of correspondence.
6. Liberty of removal (of traveling from place to place).

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When Ghevont had finished reading, he held out a wooden crucifix to Archag, and said:

“Repeat my words: I swear upon this emblem of our religion never to betray our society; to be a faithful fédaï; to be obedient and devoted even to the point of imprisonment and death. In the name of the Virgin, Sourp Krikor, and Sourp Thaddeus, patrons of Haïastan (Armenia). So be it. Amen.”

Archag repeated the oath in a low voice, kissed the crucifix, and made the sign of the cross three times.

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“Garabed,” said Ghevont, “will you admit Archag to our society? Will you guarantee his good faith?”

“Yes.”

“Very well then, that being so, I dedicate you, Archag, a fédaï, by this brotherly kiss.”

The first duty of the fédaï being to help their compatriots, according to their means and ability, it was decided that Archag should go to town every Saturday to conduct a class in Armenian for illiterate adults, at the school of Sourp Nersès. Garabed himself was giving free instruction in English to members of the Gregorian union.

The three boys were stirred by their common enthusiasm. Armenia seemed to them like a bride, very fair and very pure, to whose service they were dedicated in knightly fashion. Gazing into the starlit night, they saw their country transformed and their people happy. Garabed began to sing softly the March of the Dachnaktzoutioun (revolutionary society), and the voices of the others joined him:

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“Gervetzek dererk, gervetzek Katch Katch
Anvehergan Knatz, technemmoun aratch.
Tzangala emess, misht aznive mahe.

Heroun mezanitt, vozohi dhe.”

“Fight on ye children, bravely, ever bravely,
Fearless before the enemy we stand.
Die though we may, we go to death with gladness,
Fear of the foe shall never stain our land.”

¹ Raffi: a celebrated writer of romance, born in Russian Armenia, in 1835. “Djelaleddin” is his chief work. ↑

² Botsaris: a hero of the Greek struggle for independence. ↑

CHAPTER XI

ON THE MOUNTAIN

It was a college custom for each class to go for a three days’ excursion, before the Easter holidays, and this year the boys of the Sophomore class had selected the mountain of Sof, to the northwest of Aintab, as the objective point of their trip. Monsieur Bernier and Mihran hodja were to go with them.

About six o’clock in the morning, one day toward the end of March, the masters gave the signal for the start, and the boys sprang to their saddles. They rode horses or donkeys. These donkeys of the East are strong, vigorous animals, with bright eyes and glossy skin, and often rival the horses in speed.

The sky was cloudless, the air pure, and fragrant with a thousand odors from the plain; the fields, so bare in autumn, when parched by heat and drought, had put on their bridal array of grass and flowers. The road ran beside a stream bordered with laurel, roses and eglantine. After a ride of three hours, the party came to the lower foothills of the mountain. The good beasts went on bravely, picking their way among the rough stones and fallen débris, never stumbling. The vegetation was marvelous; as far as eye could see, stretched fields of narcissus, hyacinths, tulips and gladiolas. Monsieur Bernier kept jumping off his horse every few moments to gather a fresh handful of flowers.

The riders stopped near a well, to eat their luncheon; after tethering the donkeys and horses to some plane-trees, every one proceeded to unpack his food.

“I say,” said Aram, “just look at Soghomon!”

The gluttony of the fat boy was notorious; he now had twelve eggs spread out on his knees, the sight of which sent his companions into fits of laughter.

“Are you going to hatch them, or what?” asked the merciless Aram.

“I speak for the chicks,” said Dikran.

Soghomon turned red to the tips of his ears.

“Vai bana (worse luck), I’m hungry,” he stammered at last, “and I always have a good appetite.”

“Right you are, old man,” said Aram, “it seems to me you’ve been getting thin lately.”

“Bah!” said Nejib. “I bet he won’t eat them.”

“Why not?” said Soghomon pettishly. “My father ate thirteen once.”

The shouts of laughter redoubled.

“I bet he will eat them,” cried Aram.

“What will you bet?” asked Nejib.

“My Iceland postage-stamps.”

“Pek-et (all right)! I’ll bet my romance by Walter Scott.”

Soghomon was nettled by the jesting. He ate eight eggs easily, but the ninth had a queer taste. At the tenth his stomach seemed to close; he stuck to it however.

Oriental adores betting, and his comrades put him on his mettle. He ate the eleventh, then the twelfth! Nejib had lost.

"Aférim, Aférim (Bravo)!" cried Aram, delighted, and he dragged Soghomon into a wild dance.

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It was so hot that the company unanimously agreed to take a siesta, and not start on their way until four o'clock.... The muezzin was just telling the hour of sunset as our cavalcade drew up at the village of Ibrahimli, where they were to spend the night. Dr. Spencer had given Monsieur Bernier a letter of introduction to Mustapha Hara, the chief man of the village. The inhabitants of Ibrahimli were Kurds, and without the doctor's letter, our friends would have found every door closed to them.

Mustapha was a bilious-looking little man, with a nose like an eagle's beak; his mouth was hidden by an enormous mustache, which curled back over his chin. At first, he looked at his guests rather distrustfully, but after reading the letter from Dr. Spencer, who had cured him of typhus, his face brightened. He offered his best room to the two masters, and had some straw spread in the courtyard for the boys. His wife and children stood in a ring around the party of Christians, for strangers are rarely seen in this obscure village. Monsieur Bernier especially excited their curiosity; the children felt of his clothes, and a young Kurd even went as far as to rob him of a lock of hair, having been assured by a sorcerer that the fair head of the "Frangi" (Europeans) was an efficacious protection against the evil eye.

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Monsieur Bernier and Mihran hodja had lain down on the floor, rolled up in the quilts which Mustapha had provided, and they were just dropping off to sleep when a sound of scratching at the door made them start. In an instant they were on their feet.

"Bouyourun (Come in)," said Mihran hodja.

It was Boghos, in great agitation.

"Effendis, come quick! Soghomon is very sick; he says he is going to die!"

"Bah!" cried Monsieur Bernier. "It's those eggs."

He had, before this, had some experience of the terrible fear of sickness by which these good people are tormented; they have iron constitutions, but at the most trifling ailment, they imagine their last hour has come.

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In the courtyard the masters were greeted by the groans of the sufferer. The other boys and the members of the household were standing round him in a circle, shouting and gesticulating. Each had some advice to give, but Monsieur Bernier went up to Soghomon and offered him a spoonful of castor-oil.

"Take this, it will make you feel better."

If the patient were afraid of sickness, he was equally afraid of medicine.

"What is that horrid stuff! I can't take that!" and he pushed away the spoon in disgust.

"Soghomon, if you don't drink this, nothing can save you."

These words had the desired effect, and the sick boy swallowed the oil, making a thousand wry faces.

"He'll be all right to-morrow," said Monsieur Bernier, as he went back to his room.

In the morning, the party set out for the ascent of Sof, leaving their horses with Ibrahimli, and Soghomon, who preferred to remain behind.

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The mountain of Sof is shaped like a tooth. The ascent was very difficult, over a rough trail, scaling walls of rock, and often passing close to the edge of a precipice, but on reaching the summit the climbers were rewarded for their exertions by a magnificent view. At their feet lay a vast plain enclosed by the hills which separate Aintab from Killis; toward the north towered the great wall of Anti-Taurus. Most of the boys lay down on the grass, to dry the perspiration that streamed from their faces. A few of the more adventurous went off to investigate the huge blocks of granite jutting out over the depths below.

"Be very careful," called Mihran hodja, as he stretched himself out beside Monsieur Bernier.

"Does our Sof remind you of your Swiss mountains?"

"Not exactly; our Alps are higher and more majestic, but we seldom enjoy such pure air and sunshine——"

He was interrupted by a terrible cry, followed by the sound of something falling.

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"There has been an accident!" said he to his companion, and they both ran toward the rocks. There they found Dikran, Aram, and three other boys, all pale and trembling.

"What is the matter?" asked Mihran hodja.

In reply, Dikran beckoned to them to come nearer, and pointed straight down. There was his cousin, suspended over the chasm, and clinging to a small tree. The boys gave a cry of horror.

Poor Nejib had slipped as he was gathering anemones, and had fallen between two walls of rock. His fall had been broken by a narrow ledge covered with thick grass; a few meters lower, he had caught hold of a young pine, but the frail tree might give way at any moment, and then the unfortunate boy must roll down to the turbulent stream below. With neither rope nor ladder, it seemed impossible to save him; yet he could not be left to perish like that. There was perplexity on every face.

At last Archag went up to Monsieur Bernier and said:

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"He must have been hurt as he fell; I hear him groaning. I am going to try to get down to him."

"You will certainly be killed in the attempt."

"I'm used to mountains, and I can scramble over the rocks like a wild goat. Let us make a rope of our girdles;¹ you fasten it about me and let me down."

It was the only chance of saving Nejib, and after a moment's consultation the two masters consented. They bound the improvised rope about Archag's loins, and let him down.

Our friend made good use of his hands and feet, and finally reached Nejib. He braced himself against a rock, gripping it with his right hand, while with the left he untied the rope and fastened it about Nejib. The lad had sprained his ankle, and his arm was badly bruised. Archag gave a whistle, and the rope began to go slowly up with its burden. The spectators held their breath in suspense: if a single girdle were to break, Nejib would be lost.

The rope ascended; one more last pull, and—Nejib was saved! The shock and pain had exhausted his strength, and he fell fainting on the grass. Mihran hodja hastened to take off the rope; he examined it carefully and then threw it down to Archag, who in a few moments gave the signal, and again the boys began pulling. Three-quarters of the ascent had been accomplished, when the rope began to split.

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"Destowe, destowe (take care)!" all the boys cried out together, and Archag had just time to save himself by clinging to a projecting angle of rock. He discarded the rope, now useless, and set himself to climb up the narrow cleft in the cliff that rose sheer before him. By dint of fitting his feet to the rough surface of the rock, and gripping where he might with his hands, he managed to reach the top, but not without many a bruise.

His companions received him in their arms, and gave him a regular ovation. Nejib had come out of his swoon, and as he looked at Archag, his eyes filled with tears.

"Avf-edersin (forgive me)," he said, under his breath.

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"Forgive you for what?"

"For pushing you that day when you were looking at Professor Missirian's collection."

"Was it you?"

"Yes. Thanks to your blundering, I was punished for reading 'The Arabian Nights.' I thought you did it on purpose, out of spite—Stay still; I know now that wasn't true," (Archag had started to go away) "I was furious, and I was bound I would pay you back. But I haven't had a moment's peace since. You are so good, so generous; do say you forgive me."

Archag held out his hand in silence, and Nejib clasped it with both his own. Masters and pupils alike watched this scene with astonishment.

"Nejib, I can't say I congratulate you on your behavior," cried Monsieur Bernier. "I wouldn't have believed it of you."

"Nor I, nor I," murmured the others.

"Let him alone," said Mihran hodja. "Reproaches do no good."

The boys broke off some pine boughs and made a litter for Nejib, but the descent was very difficult, for the boy was suffering severely, and every jolt drew from him a groan of pain. [145]

At Ibrahimli, the village sorcerer massaged his foot, and dressed his wounds according to all the rules of the profession. The next morning he was put on a horse, and the whole company set out on the return trip to Aintab. The president and professors were indignant when they learned of Nejib's ill-conduct. Dr. Mills imposed a punishment of three days on bounds, and made him ask pardon of Archag publicly. [146]

¹ Each girdle is from one to two meters long. ↑

CHAPTER XII

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AN EXPULSION FROM COLLEGE

After the excursion to Sof, Archag became the hero of the college. The boys tried in kind ways to make him forget how unfriendly they had been to him, and, naturally enough, vented their ill-humor upon Nejib. But Archag and Garabed took his part; they made him join in their walks and games, and the other boys, seeing the attitude of these two toward the one who had wronged them, gradually withdrew the ban of ostracism which they had laid upon him.

As for Aram, he was beginning to tire of his Urfali, and was only too glad to resume his friendship with Archag.

Archag and Garabed had taken their duties as "fédaï" very seriously, and were trying to win converts to the new ideas, and now Nejib and Aram seemed to them the best fitted to join the "Dachnaktzoutioun" (revolutionary federation). It must be acknowledged that Aram had changed very much of late; though he still loved to laugh and joke, he also took an interest in the serious conversations of his friends. They, of course, exercised extreme caution; they talked to Nejib and Aram about the misfortunes of Armenia, then they lent them copies of the "Droshak" (Standard), "Pro-Armenia," and other newspapers which gave descriptions, terrible but true, of the condition of Christians in Turkey; and, at last, one evening, they had the happiness of admitting their two friends into their Society. [147]

They also won an unexpected recruit in the person of Monsieur Bernier. The young teacher often felt lonely among all the Americans so much older than he, and had become especially attached to Ghevont, Archag and Garabed. In their company he learned to love and to pity Armenia, and got rid of certain false conceptions about it; for he saw, instead of the Nihilists who had been portrayed to him, generous men struggling not only for their liberty, but for their very existence. He came to understand the tribulations of the Armenians, and to feel a warm sympathy for them. [148]

The young students understood his feeling for them, and used to lend him their newspapers, or translate for him passages from the romances of Raffi and Baronian,¹ thus introducing him to the literature of their country. Monsieur Bernier offered to give them private lessons in German, and they were with him constantly.

Dr. Mills suspected the presence of "fédaï" in the college, and was especially mistrustful of Ghevont and some of the other Juniors; but he could not bring accusation against them without proofs, and, so far, he had been unable to procure any. The boys were usually very cautious, but one bit of carelessness nearly brought disaster to their Society. While playing football one afternoon, Aram dropped a "Droshak" which he was carrying hidden under his zouboun. He

did not notice its loss until after supper, and then he ran immediately to the campus, but his paper had disappeared. It was a serious matter, for if the "Droshak" were taken to Dr. Mills, the fédaï would be in great danger.

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Aram went up to the schoolroom, and taking Archag aside, whispered in his ear what had happened, and Ghevont and Garabed were soon made acquainted with the story. Ghevont turned pale; he had received a packet of patriotic songs the evening before, and had not yet been able to convey them to the central committee in town. The others, too, had some compromising literature in their trunks, some of Raffi's novels, and the rules of their Society. For a moment they looked at one another in great perplexity.

"I have it," said Archag at last, under his breath. "Let us take all these books to Monsieur Bernier, and ask him to take care of them for us."

Aram breathed a sigh of relief.

"That's a fine idea! Do you think he will consent?"

"We can try, anyway," said Garabed.

The four boys went up to their dormitory on tiptoe. They hastily tossed to one side their articles of clothing, and pulled out books and newspapers helter-skelter, covering them over with a cloth. The most important publications they hid under their zoubouns, which made them look like some sort of grotesque creatures with strange humps and deformities on back and chest.

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Monsieur Bernier gazed at them in astonishment, as they entered his room.

"What is all this?" he asked.

Ghevont explained the situation briefly, and asked if he would be willing to take care of their books until all danger was past.

Monsieur Bernier consented without hesitation; he was heartily glad to render this service to his young friends, and they appreciated his kindness.

The next morning before the boys had finished dressing, the president entered the Sophomores' dormitory.

"Open your trunks," he said; "some of you are in possession of books forbidden by the government, and it is necessary for me to find out which boys are guilty."

The boys obeyed, trembling. Aram and Archag exchanged significant glances behind the president's back; they were congratulating themselves on their foresight in taking the books to Monsieur Bernier at once, for if they had waited till morning, it would have been all over with them.

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Needless to say, the search proved fruitless. Dr. Mills made a thorough investigation in all the dormitories, but the only contraband article he could find was a pot of jam which Soghomon was keeping concealed under a pile of socks. He then went back to his house. The evening before, Soghomon had brought him the "Droshak" which had been found on the campus, and he suspected Ghevont of being the guilty person.

A few days later, he called a meeting of the faculty to obtain a vote on the question of the expulsion of Ghevont and several other members of the Junior class. Professor Pagratian opposed the measure, but in vain; in the inmost recesses of their hearts the other masters revolted against the idea of sending away intelligent and studious boys whose only fault had been a loyal love of their country and a little imprudence, quite excusable at their age; but they dared not say so.

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To repeat: centuries of tyranny and oppression have rendered the Armenians timorous and distrustful to an extreme degree; in Europe, this lack of courage has often given them a reputation for cowardice which they do not really deserve.

The boys suspected nothing; they had been working hard for their final examinations at the close of the college year. Our friends had all done very well; Ghevont stood second among the Juniors, Garabed was at the head of his class, Dikran second, Archag third, Nejib fourth and Aram fifth. Soghomon was lowest, with five marks which had been given him as a favor.

On Commencement Day, Professor Piralian preached the baccalaureate sermon, and Mrs. Mills presented the diplomas and the prizes. Then the president went into the pulpit to make a farewell address to the students, and to wish them a

pleasant vacation.

"I hope," said he in closing, "that you will return in the autumn with fresh vigor, and ready to take up your work with renewed energy and purpose. The members of the faculty regret the necessity of informing Ghevont, Bedros, Avedis, Hamparzoom (Ascension), Panos and Jakoub, all of the Junior class, and Levon of the Sophomore class, that the college cannot receive them next year."

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And that was all!

President Mills came down from the pulpit in the midst of a deathlike silence, the precursor of a tempest. As soon as the professors had withdrawn, an indescribable uproar arose; the Juniors gesticulating and shouting that if their classmates were to be sent away so unjustly, they would all leave too; the other fédaï giving the signal for revolt by climbing on the benches and waving their handkerchiefs for flags.

That afternoon, Ghevont, Bedros and Avedis went to the president to ask for an explanation. Dr. Mills received them with a pleasant smile. Yes, he said, he had always been quite satisfied with their diligence, and counted them among his best students. But he could not keep them; he had good reasons for this, which he should not tell them.

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"But Dr. Mills," said Ghevont, "do you not know that no other college will receive us? We shall be accused of misconduct, and this stigma of bad character will follow us all through our student life."

"If that is all," replied the president, "I will give each of you a certificate of good character."

He sat down at his desk, and quickly wrote a few lines; then he gave to each boy an excellent testimonial. The boys were so astonished that they did not know what to say. Dr. Mills had to help them out with a gentle push, after shaking hands once more.

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¹ Baronian: a satirical writer, born at Adrianople, in 1840. ↑

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CHAPTER XIII

THE HOLIDAYS

The holidays were at hand. The boys were so absorbed in their preparations for departure and their farewell visits to town, that the affair of the Juniors' expulsion was to some extent forgotten. Each morning small groups of students left the college, to attach themselves to some caravan of merchants. They scattered to the four points of the compass; some journeyed toward the high table-lands of Asia Minor, others set out for the Euphrates or the Tigris, in order to go down stream on rafts as far as Mosul or Bagdad. As they separated, they made great protestations of friendship, which were speedily forgotten in the happiness of returning home.

Dikran and Nejib were among the first to leave, their home being at Aleppo, a city easily reached from Aintab. Next, came the turn of Garabed, Soghomon and Samouïl. The Juniors who had been expelled went to Syria, for the president of the American college at Beyrout, a man of broad views, had promised to admit them at the next term.

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The college emptied rapidly; the dormitories acquired a mournful atmosphere, and the voices of chance speakers re-echoed in the deserted corridors. Archag and Aram still lingered, impatiently chafing at the delay. As a violent epidemic of typhus was raging at Diarbekir, Aram's parents thought it more prudent for their son not to come home. This was a hard blow for the poor boy, and he was broken-hearted at the idea of having to spend the holidays all alone at Aintab, but at the last moment Archag invited his friend to go home with him to Van. Needless to say, the proposal was joyfully accepted.

After a week's delay, the boys succeeded in making arrangements for their journey; they were the last to go, and Badvili Melikian was the only person left to wish them a good journey. The merchants in whose company they were to travel were going to Tabriz to buy Persian silks to be sold again at Damascus and Beyrout. They were pressed for time, and made long stages, so that the journey

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from Aintab to Van occupied only sixteen days.

Soon the country began to look familiar to Archag; he recognized villages where he had been with his father to buy horses or sheep, and at one place an old man who was a friend of Boghos Effendi stopped him for a chat; his was the first familiar face.

Dear reader, have you ever spent a long year at boarding-school? If so, you will understand Archag's joy at seeing his native town again. A landscape of marvelous beauty lay spread before his enchanted eyes. At his feet the great lake of brilliant blue was sparkling in the sunshine, and in its transparent waters was reflected the sublime peak of Subhan Dagh. The town with its mighty rock crowned by the castle, and its fortified walls and towers, lay embowered in orchards and gardens. To the right, a snow-crowned peak dominated a natural amphitheater, in which rose the walls of the Armenian Convent of Jedi Klissia (the Seven Churches). To the west of the lake were the Nimrona Dagh and the high table-lands which nourish the sources of the great rivers of Mesopotamia. The hills in the foreground were carpeted with gay flowers, and were the pasture ground for sheep and cattle.

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The horses, urged on by the spur, broke into a gallop, and soon passed the city gates.

May I be allowed a short digression concerning Van?

According to the history of Armenia, the city was founded by Semiramis, who gave it the name of Shamiram Yerd. Here, in the charming gardens which she had planted and irrigated by means of a thousand canals, the Assyrian queen was accustomed to seek refuge from the intolerable heat of the Mesopotamian summer; returning to her palaces at Nineveh at the approach of winter. The first city, having fallen in ruins, was rebuilt, it is said, by an Armenian king whose name was Van, shortly before the invasion of Alexander the Great. It was sacked by Tamerlane,¹ and again rebuilt by the Armenians.

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The two boys bade a friendly farewell to their traveling companions, in front of the khan of Achmet Pasha, and went on their way. Before long, Archag caught sight of his father's house at a turn of the road.

Levon was keeping watch on the roof, and as soon as he saw the travelers he hurried down and ran to meet them. Boghos Effendi and his wife, together with all the servants, followed him out of the house. Archag sprang from the saddle, and embraced his father and mother and Levon.

"How tall he has grown!" exclaimed Hanna badgi with a motherly pride in her son's fine bearing.

"Look at his pretty mustache!" said Levon. Everybody laughed, for Archag's mustache consisted of a scant score of downy hairs.

Then Archag presented Aram to his parents; Boghos Effendi bade the boy welcome, and inquired for his father and an uncle with whom he had once had some business dealings. Meanwhile Levon plied Archag with questions about the college.

When they went into the house, the travelers found a regular collation awaiting them, prepared by old Gulenia; tea, three kinds of jam, caghkés, still hot, with grapes and watermelon. They felt a keen appreciation of the comfort and happiness of being at home. They talked gayly about their college life, their teachers and comrades. In spite of Archag's protestations, Aram insisted on telling the story of the butterflies and Nejib's rescue. The father and mother had heard no word of this, and Hanna badgi shed tears as she learned of the danger into which her boy had run, and gave thanks to God for having so miraculously preserved him.

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The voice of the Bakshi (watchman) crying ten o'clock reminded Boghos Effendi that the boys must be very tired, so he went with them to their room, which had formerly been Nizam's, and made them good night. Hanna badgi lay awake a long time that night, unable to sleep for the joy of seeing her son again.

Aram and Archag spent the next day with Nizam and her husband, and also paid a short visit to the old Bishop who had always been especially fond of Archag. They made numerous plans for all sorts of jaunts and excursions, and even talked of making the ascent of Subhan Dagh; but Boghos Effendi forbade that.

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The days and hours of the holidays passed all too quickly for our lads. Aram was eager to see everything, and Archag took pleasure in showing his favorite haunts to his friend. About a week after their arrival they made a trip to Akhtamar, an

island in Lake Van, where there is a celebrated monastery, formerly the residence of three Gregorian patriarchs. When the Catholicos of Echmiadzin became Primate of the Church, the office of his two associates was abolished, but the convent still continues to be a famous object of pilgrimage; its library contains many precious manuscripts in old Armenian. It is a charming spot, with magnificent stretches of garden and lawn, and ancient trees offering repose beneath their venerable branches.

An old sailor was commissioned to take the boys over in his boat, and Archag held the tiller, while Aram lay stretched out on a seat, and sang at the top of his voice, or chaffed the boatman, whom he called "Captain of the ship."

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The Superior of the monastery, a distant cousin of Boghos Effendi, gave the lads a cordial reception and directed a lay brother to show them all the treasures of the place: the relics of the Saints, the old pictures, the golden censer, and the manuscripts and objects of early art in the library.

Then Archag and Aram went off to eat a picnic lunch on the banks of a stream. The Superior had given them permission to take their dessert from the trees in the garden, so our two friends filled pockets and stomachs with plums and peaches. When they had satisfied their appetite, they explored the whole island; Archag, conscientious as usual, hunted for some coleoptera which he had promised to take back to Professor Pagratian.

About four o'clock, however, they had to think about going home. They found the boatman sitting in front of the convent with some of the monks, and when he saw the boys he stood up at once.

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LITTLE ARMENIANS

"Well, Ibrahim ammi (uncle)," said Archag, "are you ready?"

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"Ewet, my young Effendi, bouyourun (Yes, yes, let us be off)."

"I really think," said one of the monks, pointing to a little cloud over Subhan Dagh, "that you will do well not to linger too long. We may get a squall."

The old sailor looked up at the cloud, which he had not noticed before.

"Yes, yes, we must make haste; Lake Van isn't pleasant in a storm."

"A storm!" cried Aram laughing. "You see everything on the dark side to-day,

uncle. The lake is as smooth as glass.”

But Ibrahim was already untying his boat, so our friends bade the monks good-by, and followed him.

The island of Akhtamar soon lay a good distance behind them; Ibrahim rowed in silence, scanning the horizon from time to time. Aram laughed and joked; Archag was pre-occupied, for he knew the treacherous character of the lake. Great clouds, too, were coming over the mountains, and the boat rocked lightly on the waves. [166]

“Perhaps we should do better to go back,” said the old man after a while. “In an hour we should be safe at Akhtamar, and it will take at least two hours and a half to reach Van.”

But the boys opposed this wise suggestion. The family at home would be anxious if they did not come back, and there was no storm yet. Besides, if the situation should grow worse, they could at any time put in to one of the villages along the shore, not more than two miles away.

The old man bowed his head, muttering some words of resignation. He and Aram now bent to the oars. An hour passed thus. They were nearing the shore, and Archag was hoping yet to make port safely, when a flash of lightning rent the clouds, followed by the rumbling of thunder. The old man crossed himself: “We are in for it now!” he said. He lowered the sails, and prepared for a struggle against the elements now let loose. The wind was blowing a gale; huge waves broke against the boat, drenching the three occupants with spray, and the little vessel rolled and pitched. Aram was no longer joking; everything seemed to turn upside down, and his stomach was very uneasy. The poor lad had never been off the solid earth before, and soon became very sea-sick. [167]

The sky was on fire; peals of thunder reverberated from the cliffs, and rain fell in torrents. Instead of keeping on toward Van, Ibrahim had put about and was making with all speed for the nearest land. Calm and resolute, he preserved his sailor’s coolness. The boys made the best of a bad business, but now they realized the danger that threatened them, and repented of their rashness.

The tempest increased in fury, and the boat seemed one moment on the point of being engulfed in the deep, the next of being tossed up to the sky. They were near land, but the increasing darkness prevented them from seeing the reefs which line these shores. Suddenly a black mass rose before them, and the boat trembled under the force of a terrible blow. At the same time it was lifted up by a tremendous wave and dashed against the rocks. Before they knew what was happening, all three were thrown into the water. [168]

Instinctively, Archag caught hold of Aram, and held him under his left arm. He ducked to let a great wave pass over them, then, taking advantage of a momentary calm, he swam around the reef, holding fast his precious burden. Presently his feet touched bottom, and he laid Aram on the ground, in a swoon.

The night was so dark that he could not make out where he was. Bending over his friend, Archag first made sure that he was not seriously injured, and that the blood on his face came from nothing but scratches; then from the gourd that he had with him, he forced a few drops of rum between the closed lips of the unconscious boy. He had not long to wait for the desired effect; Aram opened his eyes in astonishment, wondering where he could be.

The boys’ haven proved to be a deep cave in the rocks. Archag gathered some dried water-weeds which lay strewn on the sand, and made a great heap of them; he had no matches, but was not hindered by such a trifle as that. He looked about and found two flint pebbles which he rubbed one against the others to make the sparks fly. Before long a brisk fire was burning, and the shipwrecked travelers dried their drenched garments. They were not uneasy about Ibrahim, for they supposed that he must have found shelter somewhere, and that they should find him in the morning. Archag went down to the beach and called repeatedly, but his voice was drowned in the tempest, and he went back to his companion. Then they took off their clothes, which had become soaked through again, and stretched themselves out on a thick bed of dried weeds. Worn out as they were, with fatigue and excitement, they soon fell into a deep sleep. [169]

When they awoke, the bright sunlight was streaming into the cave, and their clothes were thoroughly dried, so they dressed and went outside. There was not a trace of the storm; the sky was azure, and there was scarcely a ripple on the lake.

Our two friends were rejoiced to find that they were not on a desert island, as they had feared, but on a promontory jutting out into the lake. The cliff against which their boat had been wrecked formed the point; on three sides it rose perpendicularly, but was slightly inclined on the fourth, making a little cove, and here the boys had come ashore.

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As they stood watching the lake, their attention was attracted by a dark object which was being washed by the waves against the rocks. On looking more closely, they thought it resembled a human body, and both were seized by the same apprehension: could it be poor Ibrahim?

In a flash Archag stripped off his clothes and swam out toward the object. Alas! it was no longer possible to doubt; it was the old sailor. His feet protruded from the water, and his open zouboun was floating on the waves. Archag took him in his arms and swam back to the beach where Aram was anxiously waiting. Here, he laid the body down on the sand. The poor man must have been hurled against the rocks, for his face was disfigured by a bad wound on the temple. The boys stood looking at him, dumb with terror.

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"It's all our fault," said Aram after a while. "He wanted to go back, and we wouldn't let him."

"Yes," said Archag, "we didn't know the lake, and ought to have listened to him; but you mustn't take his death so much to heart, Aram dear; since his hour had struck, nothing could save him." But Aram, on his knees beside the ill-fated fisherman, was sobbing convulsively.

They carried Ibrahim to the cave and recited the prayers for the dead. Then they decided to go to the nearest village and send back some men to bury the body. It took them a good hour to reach the hamlet of Bos-Ujuk, but there they found hospitality at the house of an old servant of Boghos Effendi, Toros Ammi by name. After eating they felt better, and asked for horses, for they were still about fifteen kilometers from Van, but before leaving Archag begged his host to have Ibrahim buried, promising that his father would reimburse him for the expense. The old sailor had been alone in the world.

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Boghos Effendi and his household were in a torment of anxiety. Hanna badgi had cried all night, trembling every time a violent gust of wind shook the house. Her husband tried to console her with the assurance that the boys must have spent the night at the convent, and would be at home before long, but he scarcely believed his own words, knowing how venturesome Archag was. The poor woman shook her head without reply. Gulenia and Krikor, kneeling before the picture of Sourp Krikor Lousavoritch (Saint Gregory the Illuminator), muttered prayers for sailors in distress.

Early in the morning Boghos Effendi went to town, hoping to find out something, but he had only bad news to bring home. It was reported that several boats had capsized in the storm of the previous night, and the people at the bazaar were talking of nothing else. About ten o'clock he went to town again, and met one of the Akhtamar monks, who had come over to make some purchases. This man said that the boys had spent the day at the island, but had left late in the afternoon.

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Boghos Effendi stood rooted to the ground; the monk's words had destroyed his last hope, and he knew that, but for a miracle, the luckless three must be mourned as dead.

When he reached home he had not the courage to tell his wife these sad tidings. Dinner-time came, but Hanna badgi refused all food. She had lighted two tall candles before the picture of her patron saint, believing in her simple faith that he alone could save her child. Bowed to the ground, she continued to pray fervently, and at last she seemed to feel that she had been heard, for she rose to her feet, radiant.

"They are coming, they are coming!" she cried.

All bent to listen: yes, they could hear the gallop of horses at a distance. The sound came nearer, increasing in intensity, then ceased abruptly, and the next moment Archag and Aram burst into the room.

They were received with cries and exclamations of joy. Hanna badgi was too much overcome to speak, and Archag had to tell the story of their adventure immediately. Holding his mother's hand, he gave a full account of their return trip, accusing himself, with Aram, of having caused the death of Ibrahim, by their rashness.

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Boghos Effendi had known the old sailor well; he had had many a chat with him

on the shore of the lake, and was much distressed by the tale of his death.

“You are almost grown men,” said he sternly, “but you act like children. If you had listened to the poor old man, we should not be lamenting his death now. You are well punished, and I hope this accident will teach you a lesson.” The two boys hung their heads in silence, for they knew that this reproof was well deserved.

They did justice to their dinner, after which Gulenia ordered them off to bed. In vain they protested that they were feeling perfectly well; the old woman would not listen to a word, and they had to obey, half in jest, half in vexation. Gulenia had been a servant in the family of Hanna badgi, and upon the marriage of her young mistress, had gone with her to her new home. She had a heart of gold hidden beneath her sullen countenance, and always retained a partiality for Archag, whom she had once nursed through diphtheria. Hanna badgi, who was often ill, intrusted her with all the household care.

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When the boys were in bed, the old woman brought them two bowls of steaming broth.

“Drink this, my lambs,” said she, “and to-morrow you will be better than ever.”

“Pouah!” said Aram, “your tea isn’t as sweet as your name² (Rose). What is this horrid stuff you are giving us?”

“Hold your tongue, and drink it while it’s hot.”

Aram followed Archag’s example, and emptied his cup, and the old woman, after tucking them up as if they were little children, went off with an injured air. A few minutes later our two friends were snoring in concert.

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¹ Tamerlane: a Mongol chief. ↑

² Gulenia: little rose. ↑

CHAPTER XIV

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THE STORY OF RUPEN

Archag was none the worse for his enforced bath, but Aram had a bronchial cold which kept him in bed for a week. He was coddled and cared for by the entire household; Levon brought him sweets, Archag read to him, and Gulenia, who had constituted herself head nurse, poured down his throat concoctions which tasted abominably. Aram dared not resist, but he took his revenge by ridiculing her narrow ideas, for like many aged persons, she unfortunately found something to criticise in all modern ways.

As soon as Aram was able to be up, the two friends resumed their long rides about the country, and one morning they set out to thank Toros Ammi for his hospitality, and to take him a present of coffee and sugar, with a box of lokums (Turkish sweetmeats) for his children. After paying their visit, they rode out a little way on the Bitlis road, to give Aram the pleasure of the fine view from a certain hilltop. They had dismounted, and were sitting for a moment under a mulberry tree, when all at once they were startled by the sound of hurried footsteps, and looking around, they saw a man clothed in rags running toward them.

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“Save me!” he cried, as he came up panting. “In the Name of God, save me! The zaptiehs are after me; they will be here in twenty minutes at latest.”

The man was still young; he could not have been more than twenty-five or six; his face was pale, his cheeks hollow, as if from recent illness, and partly covered by his black whiskers; his clothes were hanging in tatters, and his feet were bandaged with blood-stained rags. Yet he did not give the impression of a mendicant, but of a leader, accustomed to command; his thin lips, his brilliant eyes told of an energy which death alone could conquer.

After a moment’s reflection, Archag said: “I know a capital hiding-place, and we can get there in two hours, for we have fast horses. Get up and ride behind me.”

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No sooner said than done. The horses, spurred on by their riders, flew over the

ground, and Archag led the way over cross-roads, to avoid any awkward encounters. The cave where he and Aram had found shelter on the night of the storm seemed to him a safe asylum, for the entrance was concealed by high rocks, and the place was known only to a few fishermen.

Before entering the village of Bos-Ujuk, Archag let his companion dismount, bidding him wait while he and Aram went to leave their horses with an acquaintance. They soon returned with their arms full of provisions.

Toros Ammi had served fifteen years in the household of Boghos Effendi; he was a discreet person, and loyally devoted to his former master, so Archag took him aside and told him all about his meeting with the fugitive. Toros approved the lad's decision, and thought the cave a good hiding-place; he gave the two boys a basketful of supplies on the spot, and promised to take some food to the refugee every evening, an offer which was gratefully accepted by Archag.

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When the man saw his companions coming back, he went to meet them.

"Oh, how kind you are!" said he. "You are bringing me something to eat. This morning I managed to find a few berries, but I have eaten nothing else since last evening."

He fell upon the bread and olives which Aram offered him, and ate greedily. It was growing dark, and they made their way over the rocks with extreme caution. At last, after a thousand difficulties, they reached the cavern, a spot which awakened many recollections in the boys' minds. Aram and Archag took out the treasures from their basket: dolmas,¹ eggs, cucumbers and figs, and the fugitive ate ravenously, his eyes eager with appetite.

When his hunger was appeased, the boys begged him to tell them his story. They were sitting cross-legged at the entrance to the cave, with the full moon shining on them, and jackals yelping in the distance.

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"I am a native of Moosh," said the man, "that unfortunate city, continually exposed to the attacks of wandering Kurds. My name is Rupen, and I was for three years the inseparable companion of Andranick; perhaps you may have heard of him?"

Heard of Andranick and Rupen, the heroes of the ballads they so often sang? What a question! Their guest rose high in their estimation, and they looked at him with deep respect and admiration.

"We are twice and thrice happy to know you," said Archag, "and we shall always remember this day as long as we live. We have wept with joy when we have heard the songs of your exploits and Andranick's, for," he added, with simple pride, "we are partisans of the good cause."

"What, you boys are fédaî? Then I am saved!"

"We shall do everything we can, so that you may be! But do tell us how you came to join Andranick's band."

"Willingly," replied Rupen. "My father was a merchant well-esteemed by his fellow-citizens; his business was prosperous, and we had a very comfortable home. There was no happier hearth than ours, but alas, misfortune lay waiting for us! I had an only sister, two years younger than I, and celebrated for her beauty. My father in his foresight, never allowed her to go out unveiled; but one evening, as she was taking the air on our roof, she was obliged to uncover her face because of the suffocating heat. She walked about slowly, without a suspicion that there was a man at the corner of the street, watching her carefully. It was Ibrahim Khan, one of the most powerful chiefs of Kurdistan.

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"A few days later, he came, accompanied by his attendants, to ask the hand of my sister, and was refused. The Kurd was furious, and began to insult my father, who, driven to desperation, struck Ibrahim in the face. Then there was a fight between our men and Ibrahim's. The Kurds were repulsed; but they returned in a body, and burned and pillaged our house. My father was killed, my sister carried off by the bandits; my mother was overwhelmed by these events, and survived her husband only a few months. Thus I found myself at the age of twenty alone in the world, and deprived of all; but one thing remained to me: vengeance. I fled to the mountains, and begged aid and asylum from Andranick. Together we made a desperate struggle. When the hero left us for Bulgaria, I was chosen captain of the band. During all these five years I have had but a single wish: to kill Ibrahim Khan. At last, one month ago, I succeeded in gratifying my desire for vengeance. We drew the Kurd into ambush, but a bullet was too good for that miserable wretch; we hung him like a dog, and his black soul fled to hell. Three hundred Kurds pursued us, to avenge the death of their

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chief. They annihilated my band, and I am the sole survivor of our forty companions. A price was set on my head, and for weeks, I have been wandering in the mountains, making my way toward Van, and hoping to get from there to Tabriz. The zaptiehs have been on my scent since morning, when I met you my strength was spent; an old wound in my leg had re-opened, giving me great pain. But for your generous help, I should now be in the hands of my enemies.”

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The two boys listened to this tale with eager sympathy. It was the same old story of murder and rapine, painful indeed to the heart of an Armenian. They assured Rupen of the concern they felt in his misfortunes, and promised to come back often to see him.

The next day Archag told his father about the fugitive, and Boghos Effendi approved his son's conduct. Without being a *fédai*, he had already been won to the new ideas, and was impatiently awaiting an era of liberty and progress.

To avoid suspicion, the boys went to see their friend only twice a week. The zaptiehs were searching for him at Van, and as long as they were there, caution was necessary. Rupen had a violent attack of fever, and his wound, aggravated by the pursuit and the heat, caused him great suffering. For several days he was delirious, and turned and tossed on his couch without recognizing any one. Toros Ammi never left his side (being a fisherman he could easily account for his absence); night and day he made and applied compresses of plants gathered in the mountains, and at last the fever yielded, and Rupen was once more able to recognize his friends. After this, his convalescence was very rapid, and at the end of three weeks his health was quite restored.

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Aram and Archag took keen delight in their visits to the fugitive; they never wearied of hearing details about Moosh and Andranick and his band. Rupen, for his part, had become attached to his rescuers, and his heart was heavy at the thought of the coming separation. But the zaptiehs had been gone from Van two weeks; moreover he would not be really safe until he had crossed the frontier, for some chance was liable at any time to lead to the discovery of his hiding-place. Our boys realized this, and fixed the date of departure themselves. They procured a complete disguise for Rupen, that of an old merchant with white hair and a long beard, in which it was impossible to recognize him. Boghos Effendi filled the purse of the poor exile, that he might not lack the necessaries of life.

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The three friends parted with tears in their eyes, not knowing if they would ever meet again. If all went well, Rupen would be able to reach Tabriz in three weeks, and he promised to write at once.

After his departure, the days seemed long to Aram and Archag, and they were glad when the end of the vacation drew near. No letter came from Rupen, so they had to leave for Aintab without news of their friend.

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1 Dolma: minced meat wrapped in a vine-leaf. ↑

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CHAPTER XV

THE DEATH OF SAMOUÏL

The courtyard of the college was all astir with life: the students were arriving in small groups, and there was a constant succession of salutations and embraces, for Orientals are more demonstrative than northern people. Among the new Juniors, we find our friends of last year: the two cousins, Nejib and Dikran, Boghos and his inseparable companion Soghomon, fatter than ever; Aram, Archag and Garabed, who had traveled together from Moosh; and lastly Sumpad and Samouïl. The latter was not at all well; he had taken cold during the holidays, and since then had been growing very weak; his cheeks were sometimes burning with fever, again ashen pale. His uncle had been alarmed by his cough, and unwilling to let him go away, but Samouïl had begged so hard to be allowed to return to his beloved college, that he had been allowed to come.

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“Oh! What *is* the matter with you?” asked Archag, as he came upon him in the midst of a fit of coughing.

Samouïl could not reply for a moment; then he said:

“It's this cough that hangs on so, and I'm so tired all the time, I can hardly

move.”

“The good air of Aintab will make you feel better, and we’ll all look after you. Take my arm to go upstairs, and lean hard on me.”

On rejoining their classmates they heard an unexpected piece of news: Professor Hagopian had sent in his resignation, desiring to take a few years’ rest. His place was filled by Mr. Hairemian, who thus became proctor of the Junior class.

The first recitation was scarcely over when the boys poured into the hall to see if the postman had come. The mail was brought to Aintab only on Fridays, and professors and students, Armenians and Americans, awaited this great day with equal impatience. Twenty times during the day the boys would run to the porter and ask:

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“Posta geldiné? (Has the mail come?)”

“Yok, yok, Effendis.”

But this time it really had come. A cry rang through all the buildings:

“Posta gelmidé! Posta gelmidé! (The mail has come!)”

Boys, big and little, came running downstairs. Badvili Melikian opened the bag and distributed the letters scattered over the table, with a word for each:

“Nejib, here’s a letter from your father in Heidelberg. Is he going to stay much longer in Germany?”

“Garabed, the letter from your parents.”

“Monsieur Bernier, a letter from Switzerland, and a parcel of newspapers.”

“Professor Piralian, three letters from your friends in America.”

“Boghos, a letter from your father. Please give him my greetings when you write.”

“Three more letters for Monsieur Bernier. Is it your birthday, or what?”

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“Soghomon, the ‘Avedaper.’ Please lend it to me after you have read it.”

“Samouïl, there is nothing for you this week.”

“Aram, two letters from Diarbekir.”

“Archag, one letter from Van, and one from—what, Tabriz? I didn’t know you had acquaintances in Adgemistam?”

Archag was blushing with pleasure, for he guessed at once from whom the letter came. He stammered out that one of his friends had been in Persia for the last few months; then, making a sign to Aram to follow, he went out of the room and upstairs to the dormitory. The two boys sat down on a trunk and Archag opened the precious letter, and lowering his voice, read as follows:

“Siréli paragamner, (My dear friends)

“What must you think of me? It is five weeks yesterday since I left Van, and it is only to-day that I am able to keep my promise and tell you that, thanks to the mercy of Astwatz (God, in Armenian), I have arrived at Tabriz; but it was not without difficulty, and my adventures have been little less than miraculous.

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“But let me not anticipate. When you left me, and I saw you disappearing all too quickly from the shore of Lake Van, I stopped for a moment, to follow in thought those faithful friends whom I shall probably never see again.

“I used to walk at night, avoiding the highways for fear of some misadventure; at daybreak I would lie down at the foot of a pine tree, in the shadow of a rock, no matter where, provided the place was deserted. A fortnight passed in this way; I had accomplished more than half of my journey, and everything led me to hope that I should reach the end without hindrance. Alas! it must needs be otherwise. My provisions were now gone; the country was barren, there was no fruit, not even wild strawberries or whortleberries. One day, toward nightfall, I ventured to knock at the door of a solitary house. I was well received, and my host, an old Kurd, gave me a bountiful supper, to which I did full justice. I speak Turkish fluently, so it was easy to pass myself off for a Mussulman merchant on my way to Tabriz, and I said that I had been attacked by thieves who had made off with my horse and my baggage.

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“May the will of Allah be done!” said my host. ‘He will repay you fourfold for what he has taken from you. But a curse on these brigands who rob the servants of the Prophet, instead of contenting themselves with Christian dogs!’

“While he was talking, one of his grandchildren, a little boy of four, had climbed on my knee and was playing with my watch; suddenly he took hold of my beard and pulled it with all his might, and the string that held the false hair broke, leaving the beard in his hands, to his great terror. I saw my host’s eyes grow big with fright.

“‘Ah!’ said he, ‘so you are not the old merchant Abdallah, as you pretended.’ He rose, and by a quick movement pulled off my turban and white wig.

“‘You are doubtless a spy, one of those fédaï that infest our country. A curse on you!’ and he spat on the ground, as a sign of scorn.

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“Seeking safety in flight, I rushed to the door; it was locked. I tried to force it open, but my host had already thundered out his orders:

“‘Hola, Jousif, Raschid, Hamid! Seize this dog!’

“In an instant I was thrown to the ground, and bound fast; then my tormentors took me to an underground room and double-locked the door. I was convinced that my last hour had struck, and resigned myself to my fate, but as the days slipped by I began to wonder, from curiosity, rather than fear, what they were going to do with me. Every evening the door of my prison was opened, and a hand passed me a jug of water and some bread. The continued suspense began to weigh upon me. Five days had now passed since the catastrophe. I was lying in a troubled sleep, when a slight sound made me wake up with a start.

“‘Who is there?’ I cried.

“‘Don’t stir,’ replied a voice, ‘it is a friend.’

“‘A friend? Then I have not been forgotten?’

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“‘No; I am an Armenian like yourself, and all the sons of Haïk are brothers. Everything is ready for our flight; there is not a moment to lose. Come.’

“We went out of the cellar, and I breathed in the pure night air with delight. The watch dog gave a threatening growl when he saw us, but as soon as he recognized my companion he became quiet and wagged his tail with joy. Two horses were waiting for us, with a pistol attached to each saddle. We mounted them and soon disappeared in the night. I waved my arms for joy; I was free; fortune was smiling on me again.

“As we galloped along over a by-way, my companion told me his story. His name was Puzant, and he was the son of Armenian farming people. When he was twelve years old, the Kurds plundered his village, his parents were killed, and he himself was taken prisoner and sold as a slave. The same old story, so common in Armenia.

“My host had bought him, and converted him to the Mussulman faith, giving him the name of Hamid. The child became a youth; he was diligent, and apparently submissive and attached to his master, but he had not forgotten; he steadfastly cherished the purpose of fulfilling the oath of revenge which he had taken before his dying father.

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“When my disguise was discovered, he made a vow to set me free and at the same time to regain his own liberty. Fate had favored him, for Rhasoul Khan, instead of cutting my throat immediately, had sent one of his men to fetch zaptiehs from the neighboring town. This delay had given Puzant time to get everything in readiness for our flight. First he put poison in the Kurd’s rhaki (liquor) and that of his men; then he saddled the horses, took arms and ammunition, and finally opened the door of my prison. The zaptiehs could not reach the farm before morning; we had Rhasoul Khan’s best horses, and at least six hours’ start.

“For three days all went well. We were nearing the end of our journey, without having met with any hindrances; only a few miles more lay between us and the frontier, which we planned to cross during the night. When the full moon was up, we set out, and made our way very cautiously across a marsh, leading our horses by the bridles, and attentive to the slightest sound. The hoot of a screech-owl startled us, and as we stopped, in momentary hesitation, the sound of a pistol-shot rang out, and a bullet went whistling over Puzant’s head. We could hesitate no longer; we were discovered, so we left our good horses, regretfully, and took to our heels, rushing madly forward. It was a wild chase. In the darkness we had many a slip and fall, and our hands and faces were torn by thorns. Our enemies were in hot pursuit, and shooting at random, guided by the sound of our voices. Our strength was spent: then, at last, we heard the sound of rushing water; it was the stream that separates the two countries. We sprang forward and leaped into the surging waters—we set foot on the other side! As a response to our shout of joy, came a howl of rage and five pistol-shots. I felt a sharp pain in my shoulder: the bullet had entered the flesh, but I nerved myself to bear the pain, for liberty was opening her arms to me. We soon disappeared behind the rocks; we were saved, for our enemies would not dare follow us on Persian territory.

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“What more shall I tell you? We had come to the end of our adventures, and the rest of the journey was child’s play. After resting a few days in the village, where

the hodja dressed my wound and applied a healing balm, we resumed our journey to Tabriz, no longer on foot, but by carriage, and in broad daylight.

"I have found again the generous friends of whom I spoke to you: Doctor Harontounian and the Vartabet (priest) Gerdulian. They got work for Puzant with an Armenian weaver. As for me, the hour has again struck for my departure, and I leave by automobile for Djoulfa to-morrow; there, I shall take the train for Tiflis, where I expect to stay several weeks. Then I shall go to Bulgaria to rejoin Andranick. I take leave of you, my friends: thank you again and again, and, if God so pleases, may we meet again.

"Yours devotedly,

"RUPEN."

"Shall we ever see that brave fellow again?" said Archag. [197]

"Why not?" replied Aram. "We'll run away to Europe and join him," he whispered in his friend's ear.

The dormitory was now full of boys, and it was necessary to guard their speech. Archag put the letter back in his pocket, and went over to the window, where he began to chat with Samouïl.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked, observing his friend's pallor.

"I—I—" stammered Samouïl; but his speech was checked by a rush of blood. The handkerchief which he had put to his lips was stained crimson. There was a murmur of pity from the boys, and they made haste to carry the sick lad to his bed: Archag kneeling beside him, bathed his temples, while Garabed ran for Dr. Spencer.

The doctor's face grew grave as he examined Samouïl, and listened to his breathing.

"He must be taken to the hospital," said he to Badvili Melikian; "he will get better care there than here." [198]

The change was made at once. Samouïl was not suffering, but his life was ebbing away. Badvili Melikian told the boys that their comrade was going to die, and they were moved and saddened by his words. The Juniors took turns in going to spend their spare hours with the sick boy, taking him gifts of flowers and fruit. Samouïl never complained, but always welcomed his friends with a smile.

"You know," he said once to Garabed, "I'm not going to live much longer. I am so glad; I have no one left on earth, and I'm so tired all the time."

For a few days he felt a little better, and was able to get up and walk about in the hospital garden; then he had another hemorrhage, more violent than the last.

"It is the end," said Dr. Spencer. "I don't think he will live through the night."

The boy was drowsy all day, but about five o'clock he opened his eyes and smiled, as he saw Archag sitting by his bed.

"You all spoil me," he said to his friend, as he smelt the flowers he offered. "When I am down there" (and he pointed to the hospital cemetery), "you will cover my grave with cyclamen, won't you? It's my favorite flower." [199]

"Oh Samouïl! You're not going to leave us! What shall we do without you?"

"Without *me*?" repeated the sick boy in surprise. "I didn't suppose there was any one who would miss *me*."

"Hush, hush! We all loved you" (Archag was already using the past tense, unconsciously). "Whenever we had a favor to ask, whenever we had no time to do our work and were afraid of being punished, to whom did we turn? To you, always to you!"

Samouïl listened, happily.

"Is it true, is it really true, what you are telling me?"

"I swear it."

"Then I'm very happy, for I've been of some use in the world, and there will be somebody to mourn for me when I'm not here any more."

The two boys were silent for a moment. Archag was too much moved to speak. Samouïl seemed very weary; he looked at his comrade in silence, and after a little while he said:

"I'll wait for you. Up there. I so hope you will all come and join me. You will do your best to, won't you?"

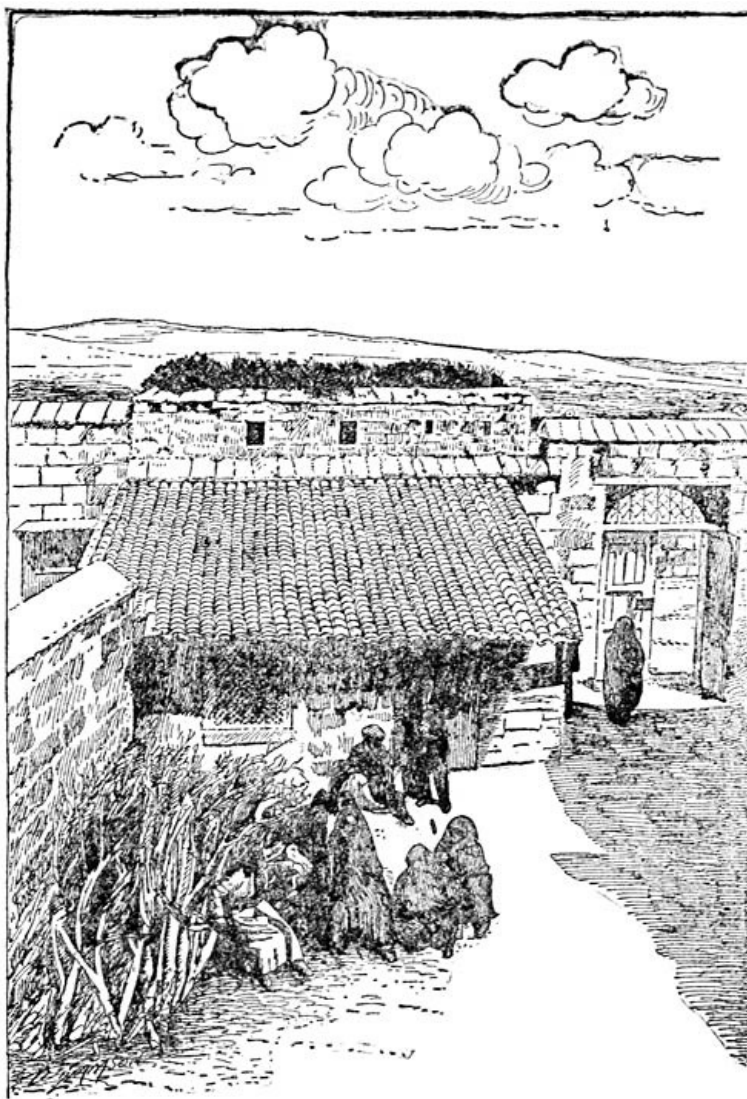
"Yes."

"And when you want to do something wrong, just think that it hurts me, and perhaps that will help you resist the temptation."

Archag bent his head in assent. Never before had he seen death so near, and he was completely overcome.

The sun had disappeared behind the hills that outline the horizon; the sky had faded from brilliant red to pale yellow. Samouïl slept for a few moments, then he opened his eyes again and said:

"I have just seen the new Jerusalem, the city with streets of gold. Angels were holding out their arms to me, and I saw my mother among them; I don't remember her face, for she died when I was only three years old, but I knew her at the first glance. It's strange, isn't it?"



THE HOSPITAL COURTYARD

His voice was altered, and in his great black eyes was reflected the mystery of the Beyond. Then he was seized with a choking fit, and Archag held a glass of lemonade to his lips. He drank a few drops, and thanked his friend with a smile.

"How beautiful my mother is! And she looked at me so lovingly! But—she—is—here—and—"

He could not go on; his features contracted in a spasm of pain, then they resumed their expression of peace and happiness.

Archag, terrified, sprang to the bell.

The nurse came running in.

"Is he worse?" she asked.

"I don't know; I think—he has fainted."

The nurse gave one look at the bed, and divined the truth.

"He is dead," she whispered, kissing the marble brow.

"Good-by, my darling boy; God has taken you to His rest."

Archag was convulsed with tears, as he knelt at the foot of the bed.

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The boys planted cyclamen on Samouïl's grave, as he had wished, and in the spring, when the fields are full of flowers, it is covered with a wonderful carpet of pink and white.

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CHAPTER XVI

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THE STUDENTS PRESENT A TRAGEDY

Great news: the students were to act a tragedy during the Christmas holidays. The winter was very severe this year, and the proceeds of the play were to be distributed among the poor.

Mr. Piralian selected the Christian tragedy of Santourt, by Thomas Terzian. Every one approved the choice, but when the poor professor came to assign the parts, he found himself in an embarrassing situation. For the boys, with unbounded confidence in their aptitude for high tragedy, all wanted to play the leading rôles, and refused to take any others, as being beneath their dignity. The college was all topsy-turvy; Dr. Mills had to threaten to forbid the performance altogether before these embryo actors could be pacified.

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The president then commissioned Mihran hodja Kurkjian, professor of Armenian, to assign the parts. This measure met with approval, for the boys were very fond of Mihran hodja. The part of Santourt, the martyr-princess, was given to Garabed, because of his pretty face and rather feminine features. Aram and one of the Freshmen were to be his attendants. Archag was to play Yervant, the fiancé of the fair Santourt; Nejib the old king, Sanadroug; Soghomon, the future pastor, was chosen to represent Saint Thaddeus, the Missionary Apostle of Armenia. So they were all satisfied, and set themselves in good earnest to study their parts. All the talk was now about tragedies, famous actors, costumes and acting. The boys called one another by the names of the heroes they were to impersonate, and some of them embellished their conversation with lines from the tragedy.

When the dinner-bell was heard, Dikran, who had the part of the king's cup-bearer, would say to his comrades:

"Come, noble sons of Haïk, to assist at the feast of the gods. The table groans beneath the weight of succulent viands, and the fair-haired Aphrodite will pour us out ambrosia."

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The others, quite carried away by his poetic ardor, would reply with the chorus of the third act:

"Glory be to Aphrodite, the Queen of Cyprus! The whole world acknowledges her power; the flowers bloom in her honor, and the birds sing her praises—," then, O sad return to mundane matters, they would fall to eating their bread, their olives and their cucumbers, and would drink ambrosia—in the form of clear, cold water!

Soghomon, in the process of learning the part of Saint Thaddeus, had become convinced that though he was not yet the Apostle of Armenia, he should be some day. Already he beheld the Gregorian Church revolutionized by his mighty words, and the people won by his preaching. He scanned his lines; he labored to make his pronunciation more impressive by dragging out the last syllables, and raised his arms as if in the act of blessing a thousand heads bowed at his feet, to the great amusement of his companions.

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In the course of a Turkish lesson, in which Saint Thaddeus II had been conspicuous for his stupidity, Professor Hairemian became exasperated, and sent him to his seat.

“Go and sit down, Soghomon; you will stay in for an hour and learn this lesson over again for to-morrow morning.”

The culprit hung his head and murmured, just loud enough to be heard: “Scorned by men, I will take refuge on the barren mountain tops; the birds will provide me with sustenance, and my soul will sing acts of thanks-giving.”

The whole class broke out into a great shout of laughter, and the professor, dumbfounded, asked:

“Come now! Are you making game of me, or have you really gone mad?”

“These words of the Saint, expressing my feelings, seemed to me to be adapted to the situation.”

“Upon my word,” cried the exasperated professor, “I do believe this play-acting has deprived you of the small portion of brains you had left! Take care, or we shall have to send you to Asfourieh” (the lunatic asylum near Beyrout, the only one in Asiatic Turkey).

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The rehearsals proceeded very well, and at last the day of the first performance had come and the great dining-hall had been transformed into a theater. An hour before the rising of the curtain the room was nearly filled with relatives and friends of the students; the first three rows of seats reserved for the Americans and their families, were the only ones unoccupied. None of these good people had ever attended an entertainment like this. They talked and laughed, and called to one another from one end of the hall to another, eating oranges and cracking nuts. At a quarter before seven, the president and his wife, Dr. and Mrs. Spencer, Miss Wylie and the other missionaries entered the hall.

Presently the curtain rose before the astonished eyes of the spectators. The stage was decorated with flowers and foliage plants, and draped at the back with the Turkish and American colors.

The old king, Sanadroug, wearing a gold-paper crown on his white head, is conversing with his prime minister. He confides to him his anxiety about his daughter: the beautiful Santourt is no longer her old self; she is grave and serious, she affects black garments, and shuns the dances and games of her companions. The monarch’s speech is interrupted by the entrance of a slave, the bearer of mournful tidings. Santourt, stirred up by the Apostle Thaddeus, has broken the statue of Aphrodite. The messenger is interrupted by the sound of a great tumult; the young girl is being led before the king by a company of pagan priests. A murmur of admiration greets the virgin martyr; with her long black tresses, her white robe, her eyes shining with the inspiration of faith, she is ravishingly fair, and no one could have had a suspicion that it was Garabed the Junior, under this disguise.

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The second act is supposed to take place in Santourt’s prison; the decorations were not changed, but the audience was not disturbed by that. The princess has to listen to the entreaties of her father, and scarcely has she rejected these, when her lover presents himself before her. Yervant falls on his knees, and weeping, entreats Santourt to renounce her error. He pleads their love; but it is in the name of that very love that Santourt remains deaf to all entreaties; she, in her turn, seeks to win Yervant to the Christian faith. The hero resists and leaves her in despair. Nothing can save Santourt now, and she is condemned to death.

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In the third act we see her going to the altar, accompanied by her women, who have also become Christians. Fortified by Saint Thaddeus, whom she has been able to see once more, she advances with firm step, singing the praises of the true God. Her martyr’s death reveals the truth to Yervant, who becomes a Christian on the field of battle. Since the death of his fiancée, life has no more charms for him, and he resolves to anticipate death. The Persians advance in great numbers, meeting the Armenians with furious resistance. Their young prince is ever in the thick of the fray. In spite of his wounds, he fights like a hero; his blood flows; he grows weak; a final blow overcomes him, and he expires breathing the name of Santourt.

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Archag put all his own patriotic feeling into his acting; the constraint of the first few moments vanished, and the college and his companions seemed far away. He was no longer Archag the Junior, but Yervant the Armenian hero, and was

suffering with him. The audience hung on his lips, most of them sobbing like children; when the prince fell dead, the hall was absolutely silent.

The Armenians were living over again that glorious past; they had quite forgotten where they were. At length the president clapped his hands, and at once a tumult of applause broke forth. The women waved their handkerchiefs, the children cried, "Viva Yervant, Viva Yervant!" and Archag bowed his thanks, with a heart full of gratitude, for he realized that the enthusiasm was for Yervant, that glorious hero of centuries long past, the embodiment of the strength and power of the ancient Armenian people.

And now, Sanadroug, overwhelmed by the death of these two victims, could not resign himself to live without his cherished daughter, and plunged his poniard into his own heart. As he was taking leave of his people in some magnificent lines, Sumpad, an Assyrian slave, burst out laughing, thus creating some confusion on the stage, and in the hall as well, but one of his friends dragged him off behind the scenes, and no great harm resulted from the occurrence.

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The curtain had fallen for the last time, but the audience still kept their seats, calling vociferously for Santourt, Yervant and Sanadroug. They went away only when the porter came to request it, and for many a day afterward, they talked of nothing but the theatrical entertainment at the college.

The boys gave four more performances of "Santourt," and won the same success each time. The proceeds were gratifying, and it was with legitimate pride that Archag and Garabed took to Dr. Mills the goodly sum of one hundred and thirty Turkish pounds, for the poor of the city.

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CHAPTER XVII

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AT ALEPPO

In spite of the fact that Dr. Mills had sent away the leaders among the fédaï, the society still continued to exist, the only difference being that its members exercised more caution than formerly. Archag had been chosen president; he called no more meetings, for fear of being discovered, but he had long conversations with Garabed, Aram and Nejib about the problems of their country. The four boys were always together. Nejib had now a great admiration for Archag, and invited him to spend the Easter holidays at his home in Aleppo.

Nejib's father, Dr. Rossinian, was the leading physician of Aleppo. While his numerous colleagues barely managed to secure a living, he made money hand over fist. He lived in a magnificent house, and kept an automobile, a carriage, and saddle horses. All this luxury he owed to his wife, an Irish lady abounding in energy and good spirits, who had been for several years head nurse at the Aintab Hospital, at the time when Dr. Rossinian, fresh from the University of Beyrout, was there as resident physician. The Irish lady had fallen in love with the young man, and he had made her an offer of marriage. When she became his wife, she gave him all her savings, in order that he might continue his studies, and went with him to Europe. After spending four years at German and English universities, Dr. Rossinian established himself in Aleppo, where by means of his skillful operations and remarkable cures, he acquired an extensive practice among the wealthy classes of the entire province. His wife did not let him rest on his laurels, however; she spurred him on to further study, and it was due to her persuasion that the doctor went to Europe every three or four years, to keep abreast of his profession. Dr. Rossinian's love and admiration for his wife were unbounded, and she adored him with all the ardor of her early attachment. They had two children, Nejib, and a daughter, Winifred, two years younger.

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Archag had heard of the luxury of the Rossinians, and when he and Nejib reached their journey's end, and were driving through the streets of Aleppo, he wondered with a little uneasiness, how he would be received. The carriage stopped in front of a large, handsome house, and the boys were ushered into the hall by a negro servant. Then they heard footsteps, and the doctor, with his wife and Winnie, came forward to welcome the travelers. Nejib embraced his parents and sister and presented Archag.

"Bouyourun, Baron Archag," said Mrs. Rossinian; "welcome to you!" and she shook hands with him, English fashion.

Her very face, in its frame of soft gray hair, breathed kindness; she was dressed in black silk, and Archag observed that her fingers were loaded with rings. Winnie was a pretty young girl of fifteen, with mischievous eyes; she made Archag feel extremely shy.

The dinner hour had been set forward in honor of the two boys, who declared they were as hungry as wolves. When they entered the dining-room they found only Winnie and her governess there. Miss Pritchard was a long and lean individual, all angles and asperities. She must have seen rather more than forty summers, but nothing in the world could ever make her admit it. She was one of those daughters of Albion who, though living in various parts of the world, still retain their own habits and English peculiarities. Miss Pritchard, for instance, would have thought herself forever disgraced if she had appeared a single evening without dressing for dinner; no matter if she happened to be traveling in Asia Minor, or sitting down to a cup of tea with bread and butter, she would make no exception to her rule. She always withdrew to her room an hour before the meal, to emerge clad in a silk dress, with a bright ribbon in her hair. For her, there was but one country in the world: England. In spite of the comfort and luxury which she enjoyed, she was always lamenting her "English home." At the bottom of her heart, however, she very well knew that she was much better off at Aleppo than in England, where she would have had to work hard to earn her living. It need hardly be said that after living ten years in this country, she did not know ten words of Turkish. She had never become accustomed to the small discomforts of the Orient; a flea gave her a nervous shock, and other insects threw her into a swoon. These ill-turns recurred at such frequent intervals that nobody was alarmed by them any more. Some one would give her eau de cologne to inhale, and after five or ten minutes the poor lady would come to herself, saying: "It is too dreadful, I must pack my trunks at once; so sorry to leave you all, dears, but I can't stand it any longer."

Nobody took her at her word, however, and by the next day she had forgotten all about it. The Rossinians overlooked her numerous eccentricities, for she was a very good teacher, and devoted to her pupil.

When Archag was presented to her, in accordance to all the rules of good society, she held out two fingers with an indifferent air, looked him over from head to foot, murmured a, "How do you do?" and turned her back on him.

But the doctor and his wife quickly put Archag at his ease. They had a deep feeling of gratitude toward him, for they knew that to him they owed the life of their only son. Mrs. Rossinian asked him a multitude of questions about his family, to which he replied without embarrassment. Miss Pritchard asked him if it was very hot at Van, and without waiting for his reply, declared that she could never get used to the heat of Aleppo.

"I bear it, I bear it," said she plaintively, "but how I do miss our dear London fogs."

Then she began to sing the praises of her native land. She was off on her favorite hobby, and no one paid much attention to what she said. She sat opposite Archag, who thus had a good opportunity to study her singular coiffure, a sort of tower made up of braids of hair, both natural and false, and adorned with puffs and rings and curls. This structure was crowned with a large bow of ribbon, which varied in color, according to the season; the dark shade, worn during the day, gave place to rose-color, pale green or yellow for dinner; on Sundays it was pure white, black in Holy Week, and blue at Christmas and Easter, as a symbol of hope.

The lady, off at full tilt in praise of England, felt a little uncomfortable with those two eyes fastened obstinately upon her, and retaliated by staring back at Archag:

"Young man," said she, "why do you stare at me like that? Do you take me for a show-window?"

And poor Archag was so disconcerted by this sally that he did not open his mouth again during dinner.

The next morning Nejib began taking his friend about to see the sights of Aleppo; the bazaar, the citadel, and the Dshami Zakarja (the Mosque of Zacarias) where is still shown the so-called tomb of the father of St. John Baptist. Aleppo, surnamed by the Arabs Esh-shehba (the gray city) is one of the most ancient cities of the world, for according to the Egyptian inscriptions it was already in existence two thousand years before the time of Christ. The prophet Ezekiel calls it Helbon ([Chapter xxvii, 18](#)). The Arabs gained possession in the year 634 of our era, and gave it the name of "Haleb." Under their sway the city

grew and prospered; though more than once destroyed, as it was by Tamerlane in the year 1400, each time it has risen from its ashes. To-day it plays an important part in commercial life, for it is from Aleppo that the caravans set out for Kurdistan and Mesopotamia.

I must admit that Archag took very little interest in the ruins of the Arab tombs; he liked better to walk about the great city and look at the show-windows of the great European shops, or to take a ride in the automobile. Almost every evening he went to the railway station to see the train from Beyrout come in. He felt a childish delight in watching the powerful locomotive approach, puffing clouds of smoke, slacken its speed, and then come to a stop close beside the platform. He used to feel of the heavy wheels, examine the boiler, and ask questions of the engineer. Nejjib would finally have to take him by the arm and drag him away by main force, or he would have stayed in the station all night. With the exception of Miss Pritchard, who continued to regard him as some sort of curious animal, every one was very kind to him. Winnie treated him as if he were a big brother; Archag told her stories from old Armenian legends, and the young girl's happiest hours were those which she spent with the boys.

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CHAPTER XVIII

ARCHAG IN SOCIETY

The Rossinians were giving a party in honor of Winnie's fifteenth birthday, and for several days before the event, Nejjib and his sister endeavored to initiate Archag into the mysteries of the dance, but their pupil did not make very good progress; he made fun of himself, saying that he skipped with about as much grace as a young bear. He got on well enough with the polka, the glide, or the lancers, but as soon as the lad began to waltz, his head swam, his feet got all mixed up, and he was obliged to stop.

"It's quite useless for you to try any more," said Miss Pritchard amiably. "I would much rather teach a camel to dance."

So Archag took her at her word and gave up trying to waltz.

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All the young people of Aleppo were invited to the Rossinian's party. There were the daughters of the English consul, there were pretty young girls of the Levant, loaded with jewels and gewgaws, and there were dapper secretaries from the different consulates, whose only serious purpose in life seemed to be dancing with young girls. Archag felt embarrassed in the midst of all this fine society; he noticed that his brown suit and blue tie attracted attention; the young men turned to look at him, and the girls whispered to one another and shrugged their shoulders. Nejjib had offered to lend him a dinner-jacket, but he was too proud to accept it, and now he was sorry. Miss Pritchard, swathed in mauve silk, with a bunch of violets poised at the top of her capillary edifice, looked him over disdainfully. Winnie, to be sure, had said a few pleasant words to him, but she was too much occupied with receiving her guests to give him much time. For a while he sat by himself in a corner, looking over a book, for the sake of appearances; then Nejjib came looking for him, to announce supper.

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"Ghel tchabouk (hurry up), I want to present you to Mademoiselle Maréchal, for you have to take her in to supper."

Archag followed him, greeted the young lady with an awkward bow, and offered her his arm. At the table he felt very much out of his element. His companion, the daughter of a rich French merchant, took no notice of him; she would reply dryly to the few remarks which the boy addressed to her, and would then turn to join in the merriment of those near her at the table.

The young people were lingering over dessert, when the enticing strains of a polka were heard; they rose at once, and each of the young men invited the girl whom he had taken in to supper to be his partner in this first dance. The couples formed gradually; Archag had made up his mind not to dance, but when he saw himself left almost alone with Mademoiselle Maréchal, who was looking at him in some embarrassment, he summoned all his courage, and asked her to be his partner. And the polka was so easy, he need not be afraid of making a blunder. All went well at first, and Archag began to congratulate himself on getting out of the difficulty so well. But, alas, he had not reckoned with the parquet floors to which he was not accustomed. He slipped, and fell full length, dragging his

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partner down with him. Mademoiselle Maréchal got up in a rage, hearing the ill-suppressed laughter of the other dancers. Archag was crimson with shame, as he stammered out a few words of apology, but the young beauty cut him short:

"Ah, that's a little too much! When one doesn't know how to dance, one at least refrains from making himself ridiculous!"

Archag longed for the earth to open and swallow him; but that being impossible, he went off to hide himself behind a group of foliage plants. The heat was suffocating and his head throbbed; he thought of his own relatives, so simple in their ways, and felt how out of place he was in this ball-room.

His reverie was interrupted by the sound of approaching voices. He would have liked to slip away unperceived, but it was now too late; the newcomers were already seated on a divan, and Archag, hidden behind his screen of foliage, heard everything they said.

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One of the young men was congratulating Winnie on the success of her party, and the others added their praises. This sort of conversation was not interesting to our friend, and his thoughts were far away again, when he was startled by hearing his own name spoken.

"What has become of your Baron Archag?" said some one.

"He has probably gone to hide his diminished head in the cellar, or perhaps he is refreshing himself at the sideboard," cried an Austrian.

"He's a regular Danube peasant" (Archag recognized the voice of another Armenian boy), "and I can't understand Nejb's inviting him here. Did you hear what a noise he made when he was drinking? Just like a dog, licking his dish."

"Aren't you ashamed?" cried Winnie. "If Nejb were here he would soon teach you how to behave. Do you mean to say you have forgotten that this Danube peasant, as you call him, saved Nejb's life? He is a fine boy, and my father and mother love him dearly. When I look at him I can't help thinking that but for him I shouldn't have my brother any more, and it's easy enough to forget his small defects in the way of training."

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"You are right," said Mademoiselle Maréchal, "but he ought not to have asked me to dance when he didn't know how, himself."

"You know," retorted the Armenian boy, "that Monsieur is as proud as a pasha; he thinks he knows it all, and when he goes back to Van he will probably go around boasting about what a success he was in society. Since Nejb is under obligations to him, he might better have given him some sort of present; the poor lad feels entirely out of place here, and is sighing for his goats and their stable."

"That isn't true!" cried Winnie again. "Baron Archag is modest and shy, but he is very happy here. Only yesterday he was thanking mamma in such a touching way, it brought tears to my eyes."

"Since he pleases you so much, I'm sorry he didn't dance with you," replied Mademoiselle Maréchal, pursing her lips.

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"He must have had nerve to ask you. No doubt if he could have executed the sword dance or some other wild man's antics, he would have done himself proud; but he was a big fool to try the polka, a dance of civilized people!"

Archag had restrained himself until now: but this last insult of the other Armenian boy was too much for him, and brushing aside the foliage which had hidden him, he came forward to face his adversary. Only his black eyes, darker than usual, and his quivering nostrils, betrayed his emotion.

"I believe you are right," said he. "I am no good at these complicated European dances; luckily I can still do the sword dance that you scorn so, as our heroes used to dance it before engaging in battle. I am going to dance it for you, but I shall not invite Mademoiselle Maréchal to take part in it."

He went out of the room, and soon returned, bringing a sword and a shield. Before the guests had recovered from their surprise, the orchestra was playing a sad and tender melody, and Archag had begun to dance, brandishing his shield and sword above his head. As the music grew louder and more wild, the movements of the dancer increased in rapidity; now he darted forward, and stood poised with uplifted sword, to repulse an imaginary enemy; again he spun around like a top, whirling his sword rapidly, and beating upon his shield. Then the music gradually grew soft again, Archag's intensity relaxed, and at last he

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sank exhausted on a seat.

The young people were roused to enthusiasm: they appreciated the beauty of this dance, and felt its superiority to the modern ball-room dances, so conventional and unpoetic. They all gathered eagerly around Archag; even Mademoiselle Maréchal congratulated him, and invited him to call, on her reception day. Nejib and Winnie were delighted with their friend's success. As for the other Armenian boy, he remained forgotten in a corner, quite eclipsed, and no one noticed when he went away.

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CHAPTER XIX

LONG LIVE THE CONSTITUTION!

Archag's visit to Aleppo soon seemed like a beautiful dream, vanished all too quickly; he was continually thinking about the good doctor, and his wife who had been a second mother to him, and of charming Winnie. He now felt like an older brother to Nejib, for Mrs. Rossinian had made him promise to watch over her son, and shield him from the bad influence of certain other boys.

The school work went badly that year, for there had been serious disturbances and outbreaks in the vast Ottoman Empire. Every one could feel a storm brewing, and the Armenians were fearful of fresh massacres. The Turks themselves declared that their government was corrupt, and that nothing short of a revolution could regenerate their wretched country. Men of culture and education, imbued with the new ideas, had formed a secret society called "Union and Progress." They called themselves the "Young Turks," for their recruits came chiefly from among the young men of the country. Their object was the abolition of despotism and of the reign of terror set up by Abdul Hamid, and they demanded a Constitution and equality of rights for all Ottomans.

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The professors of the college took a lively interest in these questions. All their sympathy, all their devotion went out to the Young Turks. But this unrest and excitement gave President Mills reason to fear for the future of the college; the fédaï were now meeting openly, with the approval of the masters; never had the examination papers been so poor, for the boys, instead of working at their lessons, were giving their whole attention to politics.

The morning for announcing the promotions had come, and the boys were just finishing their breakfast when Mihran hodja came rushing into the dining-room. He was too excited to speak at first, but after a little he managed to utter the words:

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"The young Turks have risen at Constantinople! Abdul Hamid is obliged to yield to superior force, and grants us the Constitution. Long live the padishah!" (sultan)

"Iashasoun padishah! Iashasoun padishah!" repeated the boys in chorus.

The fédaï broke out with their war song:

"Fight on, ye children, bravely, ever bravely,
Fearless before the enemy we stand."

All the boys, together with Badvili Melikian and Mihran hodja, joined the fédaï in this song. They were free! The reality was more beautiful than their boldest dreams had pictured it. God had answered the prayers of the Armenians!

Archag, Aram, Garabed and Nejib started off at once for town. Over every house floated the red flag with the white crescent; cannon shots were fired from the old Cathedral, and an extraordinary excitement prevailed in the streets. The people were shouting, singing and weeping for joy; Mullahs¹ and Gregorian priests were embracing one another. The most ferocious of the Mussulmans had forgotten their old hatred of Christian infidels: to-day all were brothers.

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"In our empire," said a vartabed (Gregorian priest) "there will no longer be Turks, Greeks, Albanians, Armenians, Syrians and Arabs. No, there will be only Ottomans, now!"

Two dervishes (Mussulman monks), delirious with joy, bore the priest off in triumph. The Turkish women had taken off their veils, and waved them as they

sang. All Turkey was quivering with the same generous emotion. The words "Equality" and "Fraternity" intoxicated the men like strong wine. Alas; we are to see how bitter was the awakening and how great the disillusionment!

"It seems too good to be true," said Garabed.

"Yes," said Archag, "for years the Armenians have been groaning and dying under the yoke of the Mussulman, and now the deliverance has come suddenly, when nobody was expecting it any more. No bloodshed, as in the French Revolution; no frenzied demagogues, ready to become tyrants themselves! We have forgotten Abdul's crimes; now we have only to remember the favor he is granting us."

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"No more teskerehs (passports)," said Aram. "No more forbidden books. We shall be able to go to Europe and study, and to travel freely. Life is decidedly good!"

In the evening, the students, led by the professors, had a torchlight procession, and went all about through the city streets. They stopped in front of the serail (palace) where they played the "Hamidieh March,"² and the Kaimakan thanked them from his balcony, and had sherbet served to them.

In the midst of the general rejoicing, our friends were saddened by the thought of the approaching departure of Monsieur Bernier. Their French master, having spent two years at Aintab, now desired to travel and see other countries. He had accepted a position at Constantinople as tutor to a Turkish prince, and his life in the Ottoman capital promised to be full of interest. At the same time, he was very sorry to leave his dear Central Turkey College, where he had passed such happy days.

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He was to go by araba to Alexandretta, and was planning to go from that place to Palestine. At five o'clock in the morning a servant came to tell him that the carriage was ready. He had taken leave of his American friends the evening before, but when he went down to the courtyard, to his surprise he found nearly all the boys waiting to bid him a last good-morning. There were tears in many eyes as they crowded around him for one more grasp of the hand. "A good journey!" they cried: "God bless you!"

Archag and Garabed got into the carriage to go with him as far as the first change of horses; then they, too, had to part with Monsieur Bernier. He made them promise to write often, and if possible, to visit him in Switzerland. For a long time he followed them with his eyes, leaning out of the araba; and when they were lost to sight, he sat back with a sigh, for he counted the two years at Aintab among the happiest of his life.

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A STUDENT AND HIS TEACHER

Next day began the general disbanding of the students. They were all getting impatient to see their relatives again, and to tell them all about the joys and sorrows of their college life. Aram went to Diarbekir for his vacation this year, so Archag went to Van alone, and his holidays passed very quietly. He did some studying with his brother-in-law, for he had to begin working for his diploma. He dreamed of pretty Winnie more than might appear to be necessary; if we could have followed him to his room in the evening, we should frequently have caught him scribbling away with ardor, composing inflammatory verses in which he lauded the "fair tresses and violet eyes" of his girl-friend. He never spoke of her, and his parents did not even know of her existence, but he carried in his coat-pocket a little snap-shot of Winnie on her horse, which he had purloined from Nejib with the greatest difficulty.

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It was without much regret that he saw the time draw near for his journey back to Aintab. His brother was going with him this time, for Levon was now fifteen, and ready to enter the Freshman class.

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"You're in luck," said Archag. "I didn't have anybody to pilot me around when I first went to Aintab."

"Pshaw!" said Levon, shrugging his shoulders. "I can get on all right by myself, you won't need to bother about me."

He was a very independent boy, and was delighted with the idea of going to college. However, when his old mother put her arms around him and cried, and his father squeezed his hand very hard, to hide his feelings, and the time had come when he must say good-by to the careless life of childhood, his bravado vanished, and he no longer tried to hide the tears that filled his eyes.

Time passes swiftly: our friends are now Seniors, in their last year at college. They have changed very little during the last two years; they have grown tall, and seem more serious, that is all. They have the good reputation of the college at heart, and their importance is recognized, for Dr. Mills has entrusted to them the responsibility of seeing that the boys of the other classes obey the rules. At recreation-hour, instead of shouting and playing and tumbling about like young puppies, they walk up and down in small groups, discussing every subject that comes into their heads, from the dinner which was not to their taste, to deep problems of ethics and philosophy. Aram alone is just the same, loving a joke as well as ever, and never done chaffing his classmates about their solemn airs and

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judicial scowls.

The Rossinians spent the summer in Anti-Taurus, and stayed for a fortnight at Aintab on their way back to Aleppo. Winnie was sun-burned and brown as a little Arab. Miss Pritchard was glad to be returning to Aleppo, preferring the comforts of home to the beauties of nature.

Nejib and his friends dined with the Rossinians every evening, and Archag was in the seventh heaven on these occasions; his greatest happiness was to be near Winnie and look at her, and it was not very long before Aram observed this dumb adoration, and teased him well for it. [242]

One evening Winnie and our friends were talking about Armenia, and Archag told the story of Rupen, and of the atrocities committed at Moosh and Sassoun.

“But now,” said he joyously, “that bad dream is over, and we have forgotten our hereditary hatred.”

Winnie listened in silence; her heart beat faster whenever Archag confided to her his plans and his desire to study medicine and settle down at Bitlis, that desolate town where there was not a single doctor, and where the people, mown down by epidemics, were dying like flies, for want of intelligent care. The lad had a high conception of his duty toward his neighbor, and Winnie thought him the best person she had ever known. [243]

1 Mullah: a Mussulman priest. ↑

2 Hamidieh March: a national march composed in honor of Sultan Hamid. ↑

CHAPTER XX

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

But, alas! the Constitution did not bring the expected changes. The revolutionary movement had been superficial and had won only the liberal youth and university students. After the first months of intoxicating joy, the old hatred of the Mussulman for the infidel awoke again, and the disheartened Christians found only enemies where they had looked for brothers. The government did not keep any of its promises; the best positions were held by inefficient men, who obtained them at a high price; the “bakshish” (bribe) system prevailed everywhere, as before. Employees in subordinate positions remained unpaid; the roads and railways which the Young Turks had proposed to build, as well as the schools which they had planned to establish, existed only on paper. [244]

The Christians, seeing the old hatred thus springing up afresh from its ashes, began to tremble for their life. Alas! the reality was to exceed their worst fears.

A religious Conference of Christians from all parts of Asia Minor was to be held at Adana during Holy Week, and Jousif hodja and his wife stopped at Aintab on their way to this gathering, to the great delight of Archag and Levon. The journey from Van had been a hard one for Nizam; she was hoping that a few days' rest would set her right, but when the time came to resume the journey, she was still so weak that Dr. Spencer advised her to wait at Aintab until her husband should return.

The Aintablés (residents of Aintab) responded eagerly to the invitation from their brethren of Adana, and a hundred and twenty of them undertook the journey. With them went the two Americans, Dr. Mills and Dr. Spencer, Professor Pagratian and Professor Piralian, the pastors and elders of the three Protestant Churches, and a few of the college students; among these were Boghos Poladian, whose parents lived at Adana, and Archag, who was allowed to go with his brother-in-law. They all started out together, a happy company, waving their handkerchiefs, and gayly calling “Au revoir” to their friends and acquaintances. Little did the ill-fated travelers suspect that this was the last time they should ever see their friends. [245]

They had good horses and reached Adana in five days. Archag and his brother-in-law accepted the hospitality offered by Boghos' father, who was Secretary of the American Mission at Adana. He lived in a small house beside the hospital; both

courtyards were entered by the same gate.

The Christians were conscious of a great deal of stir and excitement among the Mussulmans, but they were not alarmed by it. The first meeting of the Conference was held and Professor Pagratian preached a sermon on the immortality of the soul. His words made a deep impression on those who heard him.

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"Our friend," said Professor Piralian later, "was filled with the Spirit of God; we had never heard him speak like that, and I am convinced that he had a presentiment that his death was near."

On their return to the house, the Poladians and their guests knelt to pray together, and then retired for the night. Jousif hodja, Archag and Boghos shared one room. About two o'clock in the morning Archag was awakened by fearful cries. The room was bright with the glare of flames, and he ran to the window, and saw the Mission school on fire. There were men running through the streets, shouting: "Death, death to the Christians! Long live Allah!"

Archag, in mortal terror, woke his companions and, they dressed hastily, hoping to be able to take refuge in the American hospital, but even now they heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and the next moment a band of Kurds burst into the room. In a flash the three young men were dragged into the courtyard, where there were perhaps a hundred other Christians, among others the Poladian family and Professor Pagratian. The Kurds heaped insults upon them and struck them in the face; then they called upon the men to become Mussulmans, on pain of death. A few of the younger men, mad with fright, yielded, and twisted the white turban around their heads, but the others refused with firmness and decision.

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"Fire!" commanded the chief of the Kurds. His men obeyed, and many of the Armenians fell. Professor Pagratian and Jousif hodja were struck in the heart, and killed instantly. Boghos was only slightly wounded. A Kurd went up to him and commanded him to abjure his faith.

"No," he replied in a clear tone, "I will not deny my Saviour; kill me, if you will. I will die a Christian."

The savage, in his fury, dispatched him with one blow of his axe. Noble boy! He was faithful unto death, and now he wears the martyr's crown.

The brigands, now stirred up by the sight of blood, proceeded to commit the most unheard-of atrocities. They respected neither age nor sex; they tore babies from their mothers' arms, and dashed out their brains against a wall; they tied children together, and after pouring petroleum on them, set them on fire. As the poor little creatures writhed in agony, their tormentors uttered yells of delight.

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"See the monkeys of the Constitution dancing the polka!" cried one.

After a complete massacre and pillage, they left the courtyard, to give themselves over to fresh deeds of carnage elsewhere.

Archag had been wounded in the shoulder, and had fainted from pain; his enemies therefore thought him dead. When he recovered consciousness, the sun was shining full upon the scene of woe. Carefully making his way among the bodies of the dead, he managed to drag himself to the gate of the hospital, where he was helped in by a nurse. A violent fever set in, and for a long time his life was in danger.

For three days, the Kurds kept up their hideous work; the soldiers sent by the government to establish order, joined the murderers, and committed crimes so abominable that the pen refuses to record them. The massacres extended throughout the province; about thirty thousand Armenians were killed, and the vali (provincial governor), with his customary indifference, let it be done.

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Dr. Spencer was a victim to his devotion; a bullet struck him full in the chest, while he was making strenuous efforts to check the fire at the Mission school. He fell at his post, a true soldier of Jesus Christ.

Several days passed before the news of the doctor's death reached Aintab. As Mrs. Spencer was sitting on the veranda at the Normal School one day, she saw Dr. Mills coming toward the house. But where was her husband? The poor lady's heart was torn with an agony of fear.

"Not here, not here? Where can he be, then?"

When Dr. Mills came in he grasped her hands, and said simply:

"Your husband is with the Lord: you may be proud to be the widow of a martyr, and of one so brave and faithful. Our friends Rodgers¹ and Pagratian have gone with him."

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At first Mrs. Spencer was stunned by the blow. She withdrew to her room and fell on her knees, begging God for strength to accept His will. But keenly as she felt her own grief, she thought of many others who had been afflicted as severely as she, and were in need of her help.

When she had become quieter, she went to the Pagratians' home. There she found the professor's widow and children, and poor Nizam, prostrated by the dreadful tidings; and their grief was pitiful to see. When Mrs. Spencer appeared, her face transfigured by suffering, they all felt as if an angel of the Lord had come down among them. They prayed together for a long time, and rose from their knees almost happy in their thought that their beloved ones were with Jesus.

Archag had to stay at the Adana hospital three weeks before he was able to return to Aintab. Nejjib, Aram and Garabed were told when he was expected, and went out to meet him.

"Poor Archag!" said Nejjib. "What a sad way to come back! He went off so gayly."

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"Yes," said Garabed. "I can hear him now talking with Boghos about a trip to Tarsus which they were planning to take when they left Adana. We must try to comfort him, for Dr. Mills told me he was very sad."

But the reality exceeded their expectation, and they could hardly repress a cry of surprise when they saw Archag. His hair had turned entirely gray; there were dark circles around his eyes, and his mouth was disfigured by a badly-closed wound. His friends welcomed him with a warm grasp of the hand.

"We are so happy to see you again, dear Archag," said Garabed. "You don't know what anguish we have suffered. For several days we thought you must be dead, because the report had gone about that all the Aintablés had been massacred."

"It seems to me like coming back from the abode of the dead, it was so frightful, and the scenes of bloodshed are before my eyes all the time. I can't help thinking about it by day, and every night I dream of it, and am perfectly exhausted when I wake up."

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The poor lad was trembling as he spoke, and had to wipe the perspiration from his brow. Aram patted him on the shoulder.

"Courage, old man! Think of your parents, and of your sister who has lost everything; you will have to be the one to console her."

Archag made no reply, and his friends, feeling constrained by his silence, stopped talking, too. When the carriage entered the college courtyard, it was immediately surrounded by the students, all waiting for the traveler and eager to show their sympathy. But Archag left them very soon, and went to the Pagratians' cottage. A woman dressed in black was sitting by the door, and he ran to her and threw himself into her arms, sobbing. Brother and sister wept together long, and after their first grief was spent, Nizam took Archag into the house, where he told the story of that terrible night.

"When our tormentors were about to fire," said he, "we began to sing our favorite hymn:

'A mighty fortress is the Lord,
A refuge in the storm.'

"Our calmness in the face of death seemed to terrify those men, and the chief, furious at their hesitation, gave the order again: 'Fire! Fire!' At last they fired. Even then I could hear our dear Professor Pagratian saying, 'Jesus, Jesus, we are coming to Thee!' Then I fainted away."

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The Pagratian children were sobbing: "Papa, papa, what shall we do without you?"

"What miracle prevented your being killed like the others?" asked Nizam.

"It really was a miracle. My swoon only lasted a few minutes, and when I came to myself, the Kurds were killing the women and children. I had strength enough to drag myself a little way and hide behind a pile of wood, then the sights all around were so terrible that I fainted again. After a long time I regained consciousness; it was broad daylight, and the courtyard was deserted. You know

already how they took me in at the American hospital, and took care of me till I was healed.”

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1 Mr. Rodgers, an American missionary killed at Adana in the massacre of 1908. ↑

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CHAPTER XXI

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE ARMENIANS

The college year closed in sadness. There was a new English teacher in the place of Professor Piralian, who had been seriously wounded at Adana and, for the time being, was unable to conduct his classes. Professor Pagratian's successor, an Armenian of Aintab, was still in America, not to return before the autumn term; Dr. Mills took his work in the meantime.

Archag could not forget the painful events in which he had participated; he was no longer his old self, but always under a cloud. He avoided the companionship of the students and spent his spare time with his sister. Nizam was still with the Pagratians, waiting until the college examinations were over, so that she might have her brothers' escort on the journey home.

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Archag's sadness was due not only to the death of his brother-in-law and of the other Armenians; no, there was a deeper reason. His faith in God had been shaken, as well as his confidence in human nature.

“Is it possible,” he asked himself, “that a God of kindness, a Father who loves His children tenderly, can permit such horrors?”

“No,” whispered the tempter in his ear, “the God whom you adore is hard and inflexible; in His sight men are no more than grains of sand, and He is quite indifferent to our fate.”

The lad was greatly depressed by these thoughts, and felt a growing distaste for life. Nizam and Garabed, to whom he confided his doubts, could not succeed in consoling him.

“We must accept the will of God,” his sister would say, “death ought not to be a terror, but a joy, for it marks the beginning of our eternal life. In Paradise there will be no more tears, no more sorrow nor parting.”

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But these words did not convince him, and Nizam's sadness increased as she marked this change in her brother.

One evening, as he was returning from a solitary walk, he met Mrs. Spencer. He would have passed on, but she stopped him:

“Oh, Archag! Don't be in such a hurry; let us have a little chat. Why aren't you with your friends, instead of wandering about the country like a lost soul?”

“I prefer to be alone; my sadness is oppressive to my friends.”

“So instead of exercising a little self-control, you go on brooding over your sorrow.”

“I can't forget what has happened.”

“Of course not. I quite understand that, but there is something else troubling you; I have noticed it for a long time. Won't you talk to me as you would to your mother, and tell me what it is that is hurting you so much?”

Archag was won by the motherly tone.

“The fact is, Mrs. Spencer, I am consumed by doubt; God seems to me so cruel, I can't believe in His goodness.”

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Mrs. Spencer became grave. “Don't you remember those words of the Bible, ‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,’ and ‘His ways are not as our ways’?”

“Yes; but those horrible massacres, why did He permit them? Thousands of Armenians have perished. Look at the widows! Look at the orphans! Look at the misery!”

"Why did He permit it? Because he thought this trial necessary to our faith. Besides, did He not foretell trials and tribulations? Think of the first Christians, submitting to torture as a means of glorifying God, seeking death that they might draw near to Jesus."

"But what good can come of such atrocities?"

"Archag, Archag, is it for us to put such questions? I am not blaming you, for when President Mills told me of the death of my dear husband, I reeled under the terrible blow, and I too murmured, 'Why, O Lord, why? He was working here so earnestly for the advancement of Thy Kingdom; why hast Thou taken him?' But the Lord took pity on my weakness, and showed me His reasons. You know Nersès, the son of Badvili Ballosian? His parents used to be broken-hearted over his frivolity and misconduct. But the martyrdom of his father affected him so deeply that he has repented of his ways, and given his heart to Jesus.

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"Yesterday I was present at a prayer-meeting in town. Both men and women were filled with the Spirit of God; never have I heard such prayers; the world and their sufferings were quite forgotten, and all those radiant faces plainly declared that they had found the Saviour. The memory of Professor Pagratian and Dr. Spencer is alive in their souls, and these lives of self-denial, crowned by martyrdom, will continue to be an example for us all. Believe me, Archag, the massacres have been a baptism of blood for the Armenians, and have taught your people to understand themselves better. Look at the Church: it was never stronger than at the time of the great persecutions. If the Armenians had known nothing but prosperity and comfort, they would not be what they are to-day; the pernicious influence of Mohammedanism would have had its effect on their hearts and weakened their courage. The Armenian nation would have forgotten its glorious past and denied the religion of its fathers."

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As she spoke the light was kindled in Archag's soul, and he realized his obduracy and want of faith. Of course he would never forget that night of terror, but now he had learned to accept it as the Will of God.

It was growing dark when he got back to the college, but his friends were struck by the change that had been wrought in him, and were overjoyed to have their old Archag back again.

He regained his bright faith in the Divine Goodness, and took pleasure in the wonderful beauty of Nature. Sometimes a shade of melancholy would cloud his face; then he seemed to hear the cries of the children and to see again their mutilated bodies; but the clouds were soon dissipated. He applied himself diligently to study, and had the good fortune to stand second in the roll of graduates. All the Seniors passed their final examinations, and it was with real regret that they left their dear college, to enter on a new phase of life.

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Ten years have passed since our friends left the College of Aintab, and we shall give a short account of their experiences. Alas! the most terrible of catastrophes has just befallen the Armenian people; one half of them have been massacred by the Turks, deliberately and in cold blood; the Euphrates and the Tigris have been choked with dead bodies, and the victims' bones have been collected in heaps on the desert. Several of the characters of this tale met their deaths during this persecution. Boghos Effendi, his wife and Levon are no more; both Garabed, who was working in his uncle's mercantile establishment at Sivas, and Soghomon, who since 1912 had been a pastor at Aintab, suffered martyrdom. Some of our other young people have been more fortunate; Aram, after receiving a degree in chemistry from Harvard University, was appointed to a professorship in a college in the far west. He is the same old Aram, and his pupils love him for his good spirits and for taking an interest in their affairs. Dikran is in New York; Nejb studied surgery in London and Vienna, and then returned to Aleppo as his father's assistant. Archag, too, studied medicine; he took his degree at Geneva, and retains a grateful memory of the hospitality of the Swiss country. He refused an advantageous offer made to him from the University of Beyrout, that he might establish himself at Bitlis. For his duty seems to him plain: he must help his people in their wretchedness, physical and moral. Four years ago Winnie became his wife; she is an ideal companion, sharing his cares, and interested in all his work. A pretty little boy, another little Levon, has been for three years the great joy of his parents.

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At the beginning of the Great War, Nejb and Archag were mobilized as doctors. Turkey being in urgent need of physicians, these were spared in the general massacre, as by a miracle, so that Dr. Rossinian is able to continue his practice at Aleppo. He met with a great bereavement in the death of his wife, five years ago, but Winnie and her child have come to stay with him. The last news from

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their dear ones is good: Nejib, taken prisoner by the English, had an excellent position at Jerusalem, while Archag was still caring for the wounded on the Caucasian front. The young wife keeps up bravely: her faith is strong, and she knows that the Lord is able to give her husband back to her, if it is His will. Nizam has married again; this time to Professor Piralian, who is teaching at Robert College. Being under American protection, they have escaped death, but have been without news of their friends for four years. Mrs. Mills is in America, but the president remained valiantly at his post. He gives his services without stint; he has taken in one hundred orphans, and his heroic conduct has won the gratitude of all Armenians. After the massacre of masters as well as pupils, the college was obliged to close its doors, but with the hope of re-opening them after the war. Its work, however, will not be lost, for it has made upright and honorable men of the boys entrusted to it, and Christians in the real sense of the word.

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And now, after all these hours together, my dear readers, we must part. If the story of Archag and his friends has inspired you with an affection for a people so cruelly tried, and a tenderness for the widows and orphans so unjustly robbed of their loved ones, our object has been attained.

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COLOPHON

Availability

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Encoding

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Corrections

The following corrections have been applied to the text:

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74	"	"
80	later	latter
122	t em	them
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