

THE MEMOIRS OF
NAIM BEY



Armenian orphans picked up in the desert

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

*Turkish Official Documents relating
to the Deportations and Massacres
of Armenians*

COMPILED BY

ARAM ANDONIAN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

VISCOUNT GLADSTONE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

AND FACSIMILE DOCUMENTS

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON

***All rights reserved by the Author,
including those of Turkey.***

FOREWORD

THE Author of the present work, Mr. Aram Andonian, is one of the Armenian intellectuals who were arrested and exiled from Constantinople on Saturday, April 11, 1915, without any trial and with no sentence except the decision of a committee.

Mr. Aram Andonian, who had been appointed Military Censor at the time of the mobilisation, was arrested in Constantinople on the accusation of having conveyed news of the murder of Sahag Vartabed, Bishop of Shabin Karahissar, and of the massacre at Skhert, to the Armenian Patriarchate. He had been betrayed by a Turkish official. The Military Tribunal at Constantinople had not been able to prove this accusation, but as the suspicion against him remained, he was dismissed from his post and sent to the Labour Battalion to do fatigue duty. He succeeded in escaping, but was arrested and driven with others to be sent to Diarbekir.

FOREWORD

To be exiled to Diarbekir was equivalent to a death sentence, as it was an understood thing that those condemned to exile in that place were to be murdered before reaching their pretended destination, and any Turkish official, gendarme or policeman, in fact, any Mussulman, was free to do away with them at any suitable point. Among those murdered *en route* were three Armenian members of the Turkish Parliament—Zohrab, Vartkes and Dr. DagHAVARIAN. When the real meaning of a sentence of banishment to Diarbekir became known, Mardin was substituted for Diarbekir, and then exiles to Mardin were murdered on the way.

On the way to Diarbekir, Mr. Andonian broke his leg, and they were obliged to cast him into a hospital, where he remained until the wholesale deportations began, when he was one of those that were driven to Der Zor. Then, after a series of escapes and re-arrests, he finally reached Aleppo, where he was again arrested, but was rescued by friends, who managed to obtain a permit for his temporary residence in the town.

INTRODUCTION

SEARCH the blood-stained annals of the Ottoman Empire and nothing comparable to the atrocities of the past five years can be found. The awful story of the extermination of men, women and children by the direct order of the Turkish Government is beyond words. For cold and bestial cruelty the names of Enver and Talaat are consigned to undying infamy.

Readers of this significant Memoir must form, as I have done, their own conclusions.

We know the horrible facts. It is well to know also how and by whom the massacres were organised and perpetrated.

We are about to make a Treaty with the governing Turk reeking of deeds surpassing in magnitude and vileness the most imaginative pictures of hell ever conceived.

It is right to note that even their instruments sometimes showed pity and that some Turkish officials are good and humane men.

INTRODUCTION

But for the Turkish Government the strongest words are ineffective. If there is anything in the modern conception of duty and justice, the Treaty that has yet to come must rescue once and for all the survivors of this Christian nation from the unutterable misdoings of the "Sublime Porte."

GLADSTONE.

December 24, 1919.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE history of Armenia's martyrdom still lacks a great deal before its records are completed.

The victims could not even make their voices reach the civilised world, because they fell in far-away unknown corners, and uninhabited desert places; and it is only a few faint echoes of their dying agony and of their unspeakable sufferings that Lord Bryce through his sense of justice has succeeded in making heard. His records, unfortunately, only come down to 1916. But the most terrible crimes and the greatest massacres took place after 1916.

What is principally lacking in the records of Armenia's martyrdom is the voice of conscience on the part of the millions who constitute the nation that is entirely responsible for this fearful crime.

The Turks were intoxicated with the assurance of victory after the great defeat of Russia, and that intoxication justified

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

the slaughter of the Armenians in their eyes; it constituted one more spray in the wreath of victory which they already imagined to be crowning their heads.

It is the voice of that conscience concerning the martyrdom that I am making heard in the present publication. It is a Turk who is going to speak through me—a Turk who was charged with the task of carrying out the policy of exterminating the whole Armenian nation, and through whose hands have passed all the official orders for the deportations and massacres.

That Turk, by name Naim Bey, is the late chief secretary of the Deportations Committee of Aleppo. This Committee was the principal organiser of the fearful deportations. When the Committee saw that there were great numbers of Armenian deportees in Meskene and all along the banks of the Euphrates, they sent Naim Bey to hasten matters. But Naim Bey was not the man for that work, because he was not a bad man. I had heard a good report of him, how he had actually helped some Armenian families to escape, taking nothing in return, in spite of the fact that his finances were not in a very

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

brilliant condition. He might have demanded anything he liked from those families who were rich, and for whom being sent back to the desert would have certainly meant being condemned to death.

For two years and a half I had been pursued by persecution, living in hiding, now in Aleppo, now in Damascus and Beirout, and sometimes in the Lebanon, till the English entered Aleppo, bringing liberty with them. Some friends from Adana then reminded me of Naim Bey, and promised to facilitate the satisfaction of my great desire to see him. Considering his long term of office in the General Deportations Committee at Aleppo, it seemed to me that he ought to know a great deal—everything, in fact. “The departure of the Turks from Aleppo, after the arrival of the English, was something like the escape of criminals,” he said to me. “I, having a clear conscience, did not wish to join them, and I stayed.”

As the Government of the Young Turks has caused the documents concerning the massacre of Armenians to disappear, we had no official evidence to show. It was this want which Naim Bey supplied by

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

handing over to us a great many official documents, ministerial telegrams and decrees to Governors sent on behalf of the Ittihad Committee, which had passed through his hands during his term of office under the General Deportations Committee of Aleppo, some of which he had kept, perhaps fearing future responsibility; one part of those documents he has written from memory, and the most important ones are photographed and published in the present work.

His whole statement took weeks to make. He would write it down bit by bit and bring it to me, because he was obsessed till the end with the terror that those papers which he brought me one by one would be detrimental to his race. Every time he would swear that what he brought was the last, and every time he condemned me to fresh and greater efforts. The work of persuading him became a torment which I gladly underwent.

After the arrival of the English I made all the surviving Armenian women, girls and men who could remember, write down their experiences, and it was easy for me to verify the memoirs of Naim Bey. These

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

memoirs give a correct description of what happened, but they omit to mention many events and many people because of the indecision and interruptions which hampered Naim Bey while he was writing them.

Three great massacres took place after 1916.

Men, women and children from Constantinople and the surrounding district, from the Anatolian railway line and Cilicia, were driven into the desert, where they met people from the six Armenian provinces and from the shores of the Black Sea, but this latter contingent consisted only of women, girls and boys of seven or under, as every male over seven had been slaughtered. All these were the victims of the three massacres. The first massacre was that of Res-ul-Ain, in which 70,000 people were killed; the second took place at Intilli, where there were 50,000 people assembled, most of them working on a tunnel of the Baghdad Railway; and the third, which was the most fearful of all, at Der Zor, where Zia Bey slaughtered nearly 200,000 Armenians.

These figures only give the numbers of people killed by massacre. If we add

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

to their numbers the victims of misery, sickness and hunger, especially in Res-ul-Ain and Der Zor, the number of Armenians who were slain or died in the desert will exceed a million.

The Memoirs of Naim Bey begin from the time of the preparations for the massacre in Res-ul-Ain. This place is a camp of Circassians established amongst the ruins of what was once the kingdom of Mesopotamia, and hardly numbers more than fifty houses, but, happening to be on the line of the Baghdad Railway, it suddenly grew to be of great importance.

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

I BELIEVE that the history of the Armenian deportations and massacres, which have rendered the name of Turk worthy of eternal malediction on the part of all humanity, has no parallel in any record of inhuman deeds which has been written until this day. In whatever corner of the wide territories of Turkey one may look, whatever dark ravine one may investigate, thousands of Armenian corpses and skeletons will be found, slaughtered and mutilated in the most cruel manner.

I had as yet not had anything to do with the work of deportation. I was a secretary in the employment of the Tobacco Regie at Res-ul-Ain. I saw a caravan outside the village, by the riverside, composed of hundreds of miserable women and children. They used to come to the village every morning to beg. Some of them carried water, and tried to live on

the crust of bread which they earned in that way.

It was summer as yet. They could shelter themselves in the clefts of some rock or mound, but, when the winter came, one could hear the moaning of those that were dying of cold and hunger all through the stillness of the long night. The Circassians of the village heard them too, but those dying moans touched neither their hearts nor their consciences.

I shall never forget that night. I was at the house of the Kaimakam; a storm was raging outside; within ten minutes' walk from where we were we could hear the sobs and moans of those unhappy people outside, exposed to the fury of the elements. The Kaimakam, Yousouf Zia Bey, was a very good, kind-hearted man. We went out together to the house of an Agha, and to one or two other places, whence we managed to get hold of two or three tents. With the help of ten or fifteen gendarmes, and some of the people, we succeeded in pitching the tents, so that the poor victims might have some sort of shelter. Their death was a pitiful thing to behold; but an infinitely more heart-

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

rending scene took place when the dogs began to devour the corpses.

These were the remnants of the unhappy Armenian populations of Sivas, Diarbekir and Kharput. About one million inhabitants were being transplanted from five or six provinces. By the time they arrived at the place of exile destined for them, there were hardly a hundred or a hundred and fifty women and children left in each caravan, which meant that they were slaughtered as they were brought along.

I came to Aleppo. As luck would have it, Abdullahad Nouri Bey, who had arrived three or four days before as Representative of the General Deportations Committee, appointed me his Chief Secretary.

Although I had seen things with my own eyes while I was at Res-ul-Ain, I had not been able to understand the purpose of those crimes. I only grasped their nature and spirit afterwards. Every time I recorded the secret orders given in cipher documents I trembled. A great nation was sentenced to death with its women and babies.

First the Government decided that the deported Armenians should be driven to

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

Maara, Bab, and other outlying districts of Aleppo, and then orders were given that "the destination of the Armenians is around the river Khan Zor (near Der Zor)."

One day the following telegram came from the Minister of the Interior—

"The purpose of sending away Certain People¹ is to safeguard the welfare of our fatherland for the future, for wherever they may live they will never abandon their seditious ideas, so we must try to reduce their numbers as much as possible."

This telegram arrived in November 1915. Eight days afterwards, without even being ratified by the Governor-General, it was given to Abdullahad Nouri Bey. The very same evening at 11.30 (Turkish time) the superintendent of the deportees, Eyoub Bey, and the head of the gendarmerie, Emin Bey, hurried to the Government offices to see Nouri Bey. Nouri Bey at once showed them the telegram he had received, and they were together for about

¹ In all the official communications regarding the deportations and massacres, as well as other kindred operations, the designation "*certain people*" is used for the Armenians.

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

an hour. The subject of their conversation was the method of exterminating the Armenians. Eyoub Bey was for openly exterminating them, but Abdollahad Nouri Bey, who was a very cunning man, disapproved of this plan. His idea was that it would be better to expose the Armenian deportees to want and to the rigour of the winter; killing them in this way would serve in the future as evidence to prove the story that they had died a natural death.

Till then the gendarmes had not interfered with affairs concerning deportees in Aleppo. But now the gendarmerie began to co-operate with the police.

Very soon great activity began in Aleppo. The deportees crowded into the districts of Garma and Kilis, and around Aleppo they were sent in companies to Akterim, and from there to Bab. And it turned out exactly as the officials had anticipated. Every day news reached us of hundreds of deaths, through hunger, cold and sickness.

Eyoub Bey went to Azaz. On his return he went in great glee to the seat of government. He told how he

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

had burnt the tents. Bab was crowded. Typhus was making ravages everywhere. The Kaimakam and the officials charged with the work of deportation sent reports of deaths every day. Death did not only strike the Armenians; it slaughtered the native population as well.

One day I said to Abdullahad Nouri Bey: "Bey Effendi, let us relax the deportation of the Armenians a little, for in this way death is threatening the whole of Mesopotamia. None but devils will remain in those wide stretches of land. The Kaimakam of Res-ul-Ain is making painful communications about this."

Nouri Bey laughed.

"My boy," he said, "in this way we rid ourselves of two dangerous elements at once. Is it not the Arabs who are dying with the Armenians? Is it a bad thing? The road for Turkey's future will be cleared!"

I listened. This fearful answer made me tremble.

What was it that encouraged the man to continue so boldly and fearlessly in the execution of such a cruel and diabolical plan? Much might be said with regard

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

to this. But the copy of an order which was found amongst the secret papers of the Deportations Committee is sufficient in itself to explain the fearlessness and daring with which Nouri Bey was carrying out the work entrusted to him—the work of completely exterminating the Armenians.

This is the order—

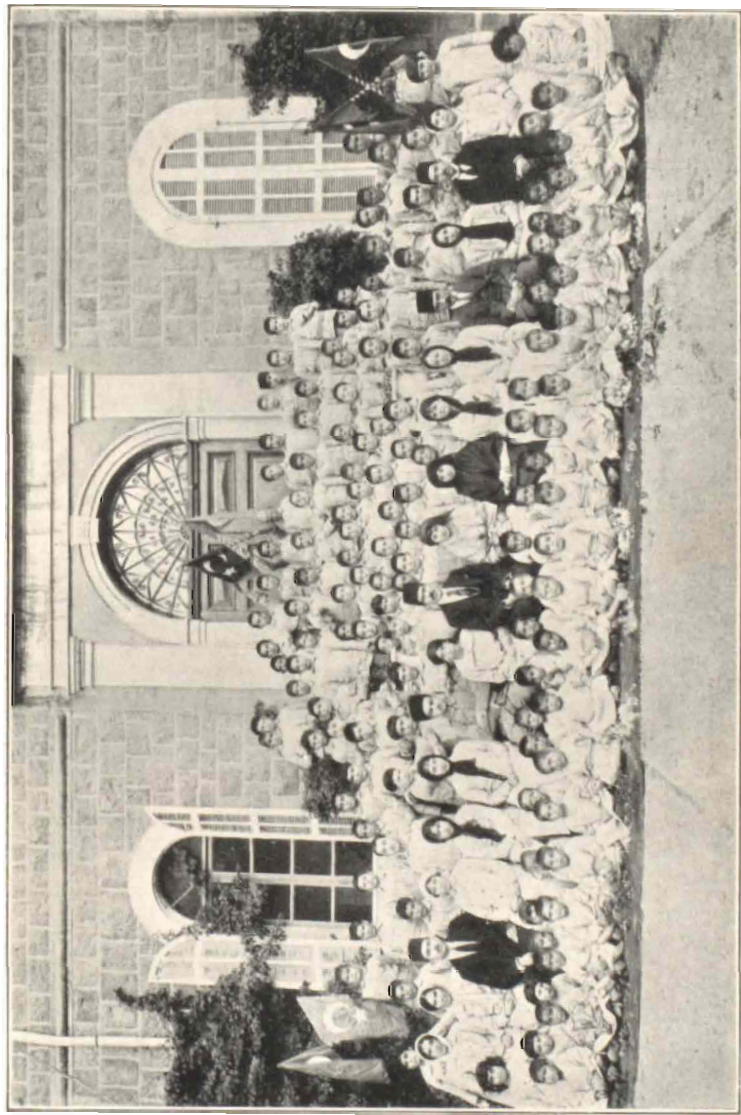
“Although the extermination of the Armenian element, which has for centuries been desirous of destroying the sure foundation of our Empire, and has now taken the form of a real danger, had been decided upon earlier than this, circumstances did not permit us to carry out this sacred intention. Now that all obstacles are removed, and the time has come for redeeming our fatherland from this dangerous element, it is urgently recommended that you should not be moved to feelings of pity on seeing their miserable plight; but, by putting an end to them all, try with all your might to obliterate the very name ‘Armenia’ from Turkey. See to it that those to whom you entrust the carrying out of this purpose are patriotic and reliable men.”

The date of this order is not known, nor is it known to whom it was addressed,

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

because it was a copy. Everything points, however, to its having been sent on behalf of Talaat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior, straight to the Governor-General, and having been forwarded by the Government to the Deportations Committee. This order must have reached Aleppo before the arrival of Abdullahad Nouri Bey, probably during the administration of Jelal Bey. Perhaps it was on the strength of this that Jelal Bey wired to Constantinople, saying, "I am the Governor of this province; I cannot be its executioner." He was dismissed at once, and Beker Sami Bey, a man who was also opposed to the massacres, was sent to Aleppo in his place.

The General Supervisor of the deportees, Shukri Bey, had already been several months in Aleppo, and was organising the plan of the deportations and massacres. But he could not find people trustworthy enough to carry out the terrible project. The Governor-General, Jelal Bey, was not dismissed yet; it was impossible to get help from him. The Chief of the Police, Fikri Bey, was under the influence of Jelal Bey, and he also disapproved of the



Converted Armenian orphans in the orphanage at Beyrut, and the Turkish staff, imparting Turkish education to these orphans

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

massacres, so there was no hope from him either. The only hope of Shukri Bey was Jemal Bey, who had been sent from Adana specially to superintend the Armenian massacres. The two were working together to put the fearful crime into effect, but they could not do anything.

Two Armenian brothers, Onik and Armenak Mazlounian, personal friends of Jelal Bey and Fikri Bey, were the greatest obstacles in the way of Shukri and Jemal, as they were trying to mitigate the evil, even if they could not prevent it altogether. Their hotel in Aleppo (Baron's Hotel), besides being an inn, was the place where one branch of the Government had its seat; in fact, it was almost a Government building, because the Governor, the Chief of the Police, and nearly all the officials used to meet there constantly. The position of these two Armenians was a strange one during all that terrible time. One of them, Onik Mazlounian, was incapable of cringing to any one; he did not know how to hold his tongue, and he could not pretend to be what he was not. It is difficult for such a straightforward and daring person

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

to get on with the Turks. His nature was so lovable, he was so generous in spending all his wealth on entertaining the people who might any day become the executioners of his nation, that he succeeded in gaining a great influence, which he used in trying to save his compatriots.

On Thursday in Passion Week he was asked by Abdullahad Nouri Bey what brand of champagne he was going to bring out that Easter. "Our Easter," he replied, "will begin on the day of your departure."

The younger brother, Armenak, was also a man who did not know how to disguise or hide his feelings. He, too, treated all these officials with extravagant generosity, and even when a man with the evil reputation of Zeki Bey came to Aleppo on his way to Der Zor, he invited him to his house and tried to make him feel friendly towards the Armenians. He was at the Police Headquarters almost every day to intervene on behalf of some individual, or some family.

Jemal Pasha liked and protected the two brothers. Shukri Bey understood that they were an obstacle to him, and would call out—

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

“First of all that nest (Baron’s Hotel) should be cleared out.”

It was after the appointment of Mustafa Abdullhalik Bey as Governor-General of Aleppo that those fearful massacres took place.

At first there was an Executive Committee in the Deportations Committee of Aleppo, by means of which the deportations of the Armenians to the desert were carried out. So long as the work was in the hands of this executive committee, the deportees were to a certain extent immune from spoliation and brutal treatment. The Government, realising that they could not effect their ultimate purpose in this way, dismissed the Governor (Bekir Sami Bey), and sent in his place Mustafa Abdullhalik Bey, who was already won over to their purpose. This man was an enemy of the Armenians, and tried, in the name of Turkey, to crush out the whole Armenian race. The orders sent by him to the Deportations Committee are so ruthless that one can hardly explain them. Some of the Armenian members of the Ottoman Parliament had—probably with many supplications—succeeded in

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

obtaining from the Ministry of the Interior permission for their families to remain in Aleppo. The Ministry of the Interior sent orders about them to Mustafa Abdullhalik Bey, but he concealed these orders, and sent those families also away to the desert.

I know of fifteen or twenty families which had received permission to stay in Aleppo, but which he sent to the desert.

The Government had given Abdullahad Nouri Bey as a colleague to this man. The representative of the General Deportations Committee, Nouri Bey was a very clever and naturally cruel man, and he was filled with a special enmity against the Armenians. He was an incarnation of refinement of cruelty. The sufferings and misery of the Armenians, the frequent reports of deaths among them, filled him with such rapture that he almost danced with joy, because all these things were the result of his orders. "The Government does not want these people to live," he would say. He used to say that, when he was called to this office, as he was leaving for Aleppo, the Advisor of the Ministry of the Interior suggested that he should see Talaat Pasha before he left.

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

Nouri Bey went to the Sublime Porte. There were a few guests with the Pasha.

“When do you leave?” he asked, then, rising, he took him to the window, and said in an undertone: “Of course you know what the work is that you are expected to do. I must see Turkey rid of those cursed people” (the Armenians).

Jemal Pasha had ordered that five or six Armenian families who had been working (with their carts) in the tunnel of Intilli, should go to Damascus. The Governor had communicated this order to Nouri Bey, who added the following inscription to it—

“Does a great Government, which has deported hundreds of thousands of Armenians, need two broken carts belonging to a handful of Armenians, that these people should be separated from the General Deportation to the desert, and sent to Damascus?”

He was a very nervous and a very strict man.¹

¹ Abdullahad Nouri Bey never took bribes. “Of course I like bribes,” he would say, “but I am afraid to accept them. I am afraid that in the place of the money which enters into my pocket an Armenian—even if it is only one Armenian—will escape.”

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

Abdullahad Nouri Bey's principal colleague was his immediate subordinate, Eyoub Sabri Bey, both a bloodthirsty and a corrupt man. His aim was always killing and, still more, plundering. During his time of office he accumulated great wealth.

This man, who had grown rich through the great amount of plunder that he had taken from the Armenians, never did any good to any Armenians. His religion and his conscience were money. The brutalities which he committed against the Armenians were not committed in the name of any patriotic ideal.

By the decrees of the Governor of Aleppo, Abdullhalik Bey, the representative of the General Deportations Committee, Abdullahad Nouri Bey had begun to make arrangements for the deportation; and when they had once begun working, crime succeeded crime.

A new and awful order had arrived from the Ministry of the Interior, which gave them every license. And, as it was, they needed no license.

These are the orders—

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

“ To the Government of Aleppo.

“ *March 9, 1915.*—All rights of the Armenians to live and work on Turkish soil have been completely cancelled, and with regard to this the Government takes all responsibility on itself, and has commanded that even babes in the cradle are not to be spared. The results of carrying out this order have been seen in some provinces. In spite of this, for reasons unknown to us, exceptional measures are taken with ‘Certain People,’ and those people instead of being sent straight to the place of exile are left in Aleppo, whereby the Government is involved in an additional difficulty. Without listening to any of their reasoning, remove them thence—women or children, whatever they may be, even if they are incapable of moving; and do not let the people protect them, because, through their ignorance, they place material gains higher than patriotic feelings, and cannot appreciate the great policy of the Government in insisting upon this. Because instead of the indirect measures of extermination used in other places—such as severity, haste (in carrying out the deportations), difficulties of travelling and misery—direct measures can safely be used there, so work heartily.

“ General Orders have been communicated from the War Office to all the

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

Commanders of the Army that they are not to interfere in the work of deportation.¹

“Tell the officials that are to be appointed for that purpose that they must work to put into execution our real intent, without being afraid of responsibility. Please send cipher reports of the results of your activities every week.

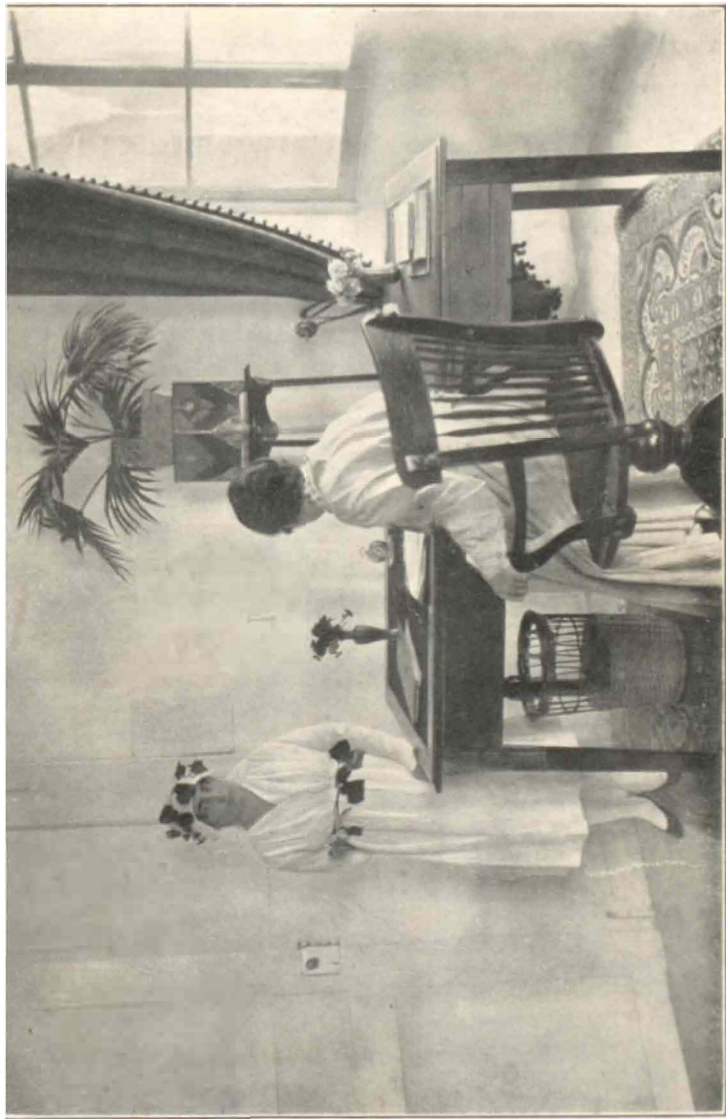
“Minister of the Interior,
“TALAAT.”

When this order came, the Deportations Committee of Aleppo had the right to do all sorts of things, under the direct orders of the Governor-General.

The reasons for leaving all the work of deportation in the hands of one man was that the orders given for putting barbarities into execution should be kept as secret as possible—so that many people might not know what was going on, and the crime might be committed in silence, without being noised abroad.

The camp where the deportees were

¹ For a time the Commanding Officers of the military camps began to separate artisans from amongst the deportees, for the erection of military buildings. The deportation officials wrote to Constantinople complaining of this, and Talaat Pasha sends this order to say that the right to keep back artisans had been taken from the military officers.



Halide Hanum (sitting), a Turkish authoress, a most active worker at the conversion of Armenian orphans to Islam. An Armenian girl (standing) is being allured into harem life

THE MEMOIRS OF NAIM BEY

gathered together was in the dreary height of Karlik, twenty minutes from Aleppo. From this place the deportees were sent to the desert. The lives of the Armenians who were there depended on the caprice of a police sergeant, or a deportation official.

Anyhow, there was no hope of life for any one who went a step beyond Aleppo. The whole line from Karlik to Der Zor was a track of misery—a graveyard. The officials in charge had been ordered not to abstain from any brutality which would cause death.

The two following telegrams prove this—both of them sent on behalf of Talaat Pasha, the Minister of the Interior.

“ We hear that some officials have been brought before a military tribunal (court martial) under the accusation of extortion and severity towards Certain People (the Armenians). Even though this may be a mere formality, it may lessen the energy of other officials. For this reason I command that you shall not allow such examinations.¹

“ Minister of the Interior,

“ TALAAT.”

¹ Sergeant Rahmeddin, the Mudir of Abu-Harrad, (one of the camps on the Taurus), who had