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A MODERN CITY OF REFUGE.

By

S. G. DUNN,

Eyewitness, Mes. Ex. Force.

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(By S. G. DUNN, EYEWITNESS, MES. EX. FORCE).

One of the most interesting sights in the occupied territory of Iraq at the present time is the enormous camp at Ba'qubah, thirty-three miles north-east of Baghdad, in which are living some forty-five thousand people who fled for protection to our Army in the late summer of last year when they had been forced out of their own country by the overwhelming pressure of Turk, Persian and Kurd. The sudden influx of so large a number of starving and destitute refugees, most of them enfeebled by diseases as a consequence of long exposure to the cruel conditions of a hurried flight through hostile regions, would put a severe strain upon the most efficiently organised modern state with all the resources of civilisation at its command ; but at Hamadan where this vast undisciplined horde first came in contact with our line of communications through Persia, there was only a small post of British troops precariously supplied at the best of times by motor transport along the two hundred miles of very rough road from Baghdad. The locality itself had been stripped bare by the Turkish and Russian Armies which had successively occupied it, and its inhabitants were in a deplorable condition only relieved by the measures which we had taken on our recent arrival to keep them from utter starvation. The problem created by the appearance of these new claimants to our charity can be imagined, and in the whole history of our campaign here there can be no more amazing chapter than that which tells how we tackled it. The success of our endeavours is patent to anyone who visits the camp where these refugees are now enjoying a better condition of life than they have known for many years past and visibly recovering every day from the effects of their terrible experience ; but, before attempting to describe what I saw there, it may be of interest to give some account of the people themselves and the events which led to their passing under our care.

I.

They are all Christians, but belong to different races and speak different languages, the only bond between them being their common heritage of persecution amid the complicated politics of the wild country from which they come. This can be most readily located on the map by drawing a triangle with its apex at Mosul extending on one side north-west to Lake Van, and on the other north-east to lake Urmia. Apart from the plain north of Mosul and the lands bordering on the two lakes, the whole of this area is mountainous, a region of barren crags and deep gorges filled in summer by roaring torrents and in winter choked with snow; but wherever a valley widens out there is a village surrounded by terraced fields which the owners irrigate by water drawn off from the river through rocky channels. Millet and rice are the chief products of cultivation, but the inhabitants depend mainly on their flocks for support. As soon as the snows are melted, the women and children with some of the men migrate with these to the upland pastures, while the rest remain below to look after the crops. It is a land of long feuds and sudden raids where all go armed and life is always uncertain. The Turko-Persian frontier line runs through it in a south-easterly direction between the intricate and almost inaccessible hills of the centre where the Great Zap and its affluents have their sources, and the lower district sloping down to the Urmia plain, so that the greater part of the population is, nominally at least, subject to Turkish rule; but outside authority is little regarded and local chieftains alone can exercise any real control. Kurds and Christians are everywhere in close proximity and often intermingled; massacres have been frequent and the Turks who took over the southern or Hakkari country from the Kurds as a consequence of British intervention after the great slaughter of 1840 have done nothing to stop them; the oppression of the weaker is the rule of life and mutual distrust the one enduring convention of intercourse.

It is in this country of diverse races and conflicting religions that the people who sought our protection last summer have their homes. One-third of the refugees now at the Ba'qubah Camp are Armenians from the shores of lake Van and the plains of Salmas and Urmia. In conjunction

with others of their race living further to the north they took up arms against the Turk at the beginning of the war and joined the Russians. On the final withdrawal of the latter at the end of 1917 they stayed behind and co-operated with the other Christians of the district in an endeavour to stem the Turkish advance on Persia with the help of Russian arms and ammunition. The uneven contest was too much for them, as we shall see later, and the remnant escaped with the utmost difficulty. Their lot has been a terrible one. Massacred by the Turks before the actual outbreak of war, they suffered twice again when deserted by the Russians, and it is surprising that they held out as stubbornly as they did. The question of their repatriation comes under the larger problem of the future of the Armenians as a whole; many of their race have been massacred and many deported by the Turks; others have fled to the Caucasus and but few can be left in their original homes. While the Turkish governors rule at Bitlis and Van they cannot return, and meanwhile it is to be hoped that the Powers will find some solution to the Armenian problem which has shamed the world so long.

The other refugees at the Camp belong to a little known people whose history is, however, as interesting as it is obscure. They claimed to be descended from the ancient Assyrians and are sometimes called by that name; they still keep the "Fast of the Ninevites", and their national songs contain many references to the past glory of Nineveh and the hope of its revival. Some of them, certainly, with their pointed black beards and their conical hats look as if they had just stepped down from one of the Layard sculptures at the British Museum; but the race is undoubtedly mixed, and one meets with distinctively Semitic, Tartar, and Kurdish types among them. They are more commonly known from the form of Christianity which they profess as East Syrians or Nestorians. Their tradition is that two of the wise men who first saw the star in the East were natives of Urmia and they show their tombs there in the Church of Mart Mariam to this day. St. Thomas visited them on his way to India, it is said, and two of the Seventy organised their Church. However that may be, it spread rapidly, and there is existing evidence in stone inscriptions that their missionaries penetrated as far as China. Even now some of their faith are to be

found in the South of India on the Malabar Coast. At one time their Patriarch had his headquarters at Ctesiphon and theirs was the dominant religion of the Near East : but Islam proved too strong a rival and to-day they can count on few co-religionists outside their own mountain home. Men of the same race are living in Mosul, Basrah and other towns in Mesopotamia, but these have renounced the Nestorian doctrine and are in communion with Rome under the name of Chaldeans.

These East Assyrians in the area which we have defined above may be divided into two sections, the Ashiret, or independent tribesmen, and the Ryat, or subject people. The former are a sturdy race of mountaineers paying no direct taxes to Turk or Persian, and defending by armed force any invasion of their fastnesses ; the latter, who live for the most part in Turkish territory, are entirely Turkish subjects, pay taxes and may not carry arms. Many of them are servants to the Kurds and all are the easy prey of raiding parties.

Each community of Ashiret is governed by its own Malik or Chief who is responsible to the Patriarch of the whole tribe for the state of his district. The Patriarch is the spiritual and temporal head of all the Nestorians, with the title of Mar Shimun or Lord Simon ; his office, like that of the Bishops under him, is hereditary, and as he is not allowed to marry, his brother or some near relative must provide for the succession. He draws a small monthly salary from the Turkish Government and is responsible for the tribal tribute which he collects from the Maliks. He has absolute control and rules in true patriarchal fashion, keeping open house, settling all disputes and generally acting as the father of his people ; it is a most simple form of Government and seems to work well. The home of the Patriarch is at Kochannes, north of Julamerk, in the centre of the Nestorian country ; the present Mar Shimun is in our camp and about eight hundred of the refugees come from this district. More than ten thousand are from the country a little to the south, men of Tiara and Tkhuma, the most warlike of the race, and men of Jilu and Baz. Others come from the regions to the east Gawar, Shamsdin, Tergawar and Mergawar ; there are three sections from the shores of Lake Urmia, and one from the country of Berwar near Amadia, due north of Mosul ; while

from the extreme west of our triangle come the men of Bohtan. The distribution is given on the attached map, and from this it will be seen that the majority of the refugees belong to the mountain district of the centre. The most characteristic are the men of Tiari and Tkhuma ; the difficulty of approach to their country has enabled them to preserve their old customs intact, and the struggle against nature has made them altogether hardier than their brethren on the lower lands. They are the most Assyrian in appearance and may claim to be the true representatives of the race. In their short jackets, wide trousers, broad sashes and conical hats they are a picturesque sight, and their love of colour leads them to brighten their garments by patches of red and blue. The Jilu people are a smaller community but better known, for some of them have emigrated to Europe and the United States where their skill in the less scrupulous methods of living on their wits has made their name somewhat unpopular. The camp at Ba'qubah is often called the Jilu Camp, but this is a misnomer as the Jilus make but a very small proportion of its inhabitants and are by no means as representative of the East Syrian race as the other mountaineers.

It remains to show how these people of the wilds became involved in the world war and to sketch the course of events that drove them out of their own land into shelter with us.

II.

Reference has already been made to the massacres before the war. The Armenians had suffered too often at the hand of the Turk to be in any doubt of his intentions towards them, nor had the East Syrians any hope of better treatment. The Kurdish Chief, Reschid Beg of Berwar, who had been responsible for the great massacre of 1908, was still unpunished, and as recently as August 1914, before Turkey declared War on Russia, the villages of Tergawar and Mergawar had been raided and destroyed by Turks and Kurds with the connivance of the Persians in whose territory they lie. It was natural, therefore, when Turkey threw in her lot with Germany, that these oppressed peoples should regard Russia and Great Britain as their champions and be ready to assist them as allies. When the Russians advanced

to Van and Urmia the Christians of those regions, both Armenian and East Syrian, at once joined them and took their share of the fighting. The Russian retreat from Urmia at the end of 1914 was followed by a general massacre of their allies in which the Persians joined ; but in spite of this, the East Syrians of the mountain district responded to the Russian invitation to help them in the spring of 1915 and mustered at Julamerk to support them with as many men as they could collect. No sooner had they done this, however, than the Russians decided to withdraw to Van and the mountaineers found themselves deserted. They asked for arms and ammunition and were refused ; they had no time to evacuate their country ; their destruction seemed certain. The Turks attacked in force but for six months were met by a stubborn resistance. At last the end came and the East Syrians retreated across the frontier to the Persian plains west of Lake Urmia and the remnant of their race which survived there. The country which they were thus compelled to abandon to the Turks was completely devastated, every village being razed to the ground.

Yet even after this experience of their Russian alliance, when the Russians returned in the spring of 1916, the East Syrians consented once more to serve with them ; two battalions were formed from the mountaineers and fought as regular units of the Russian Army until its dissolution. Another battalion was organised later and placed under the command of the Patriarch. The campaign against the Turks and Kurds was carried on with varying fortune till the end of 1917 when the Russians began their final retreat from this region and the position of their allies was again in the utmost peril. This time the Russians gave them arms and ammunition and left behind some instructors ; an irregular force composed of the East Syrian mountaineers and the Armenians from Van was formed and prepared to resist the Turkish advance on Persia. This was resented by the Persians who attempted to disarm them, and fighting between the Christians and Kurds became general. The former gained a considerable victory at Urmia in February 1918, and the Kurds were inclined to call a truce ; the East Syrian Patriarch visited Simku, a Kurdish Chieftain, at Salmas, and proposals were under discussion when Persian intrigues intervened. The

Patriarch and a number of his followers were treacherously murdered by their host about the middle of March and all hope of a reconciliation vanished. One Agha Petros, who had had an adventurous career in Europe and America before the War, organised the East Syrians and went off to besiege Simku in his fortress; they inflicted a severe defeat on his men, but the Chief himself escaped and is still at large. Soon afterwards, in April, the Turks advanced, and from then on till July the East Syrians assisted by the Armenians were confronted by the combined Turkish and Kurdish forces, while the Persians massacred any Christian community in their midst that was unarmed. In fourteen engagements this little irregular army defeated its enemies and on more than one occasion captured Turkish guns; but ammunition was running low and assistance sorely needed. Our own troops were at this time holding the Persian road to the Caspian which passes through Ba'qubah, Kermanshah, Hamadan and Kazvin, but supplies were scarce all along the line and it would have been impossible to maintain a force of any size on the west. Attempts were, however, made to push small detachments through towards Urmia. The Turks were in possession of Tabriz on the North and the only possible way to get in touch with the East Syrians was by the route from Hamadan through Bijar and Sain Kaleh to the southern shore of Lake Urmia, a journey of 320 miles. The difficulties were great as the whole of this country had been laid waste, but it was decided to send up a convoy of ammunition in charge of a squadron of cavalry and a machine gun section to Sain Kaleh and meet the East Syrians there if they could withdraw to that point.

Early in July an officer of the Air Force flew across and effected a landing at Urmia where he found some members of the American Mission who had refused to leave with the Russians. He was received with enthusiasm by the East Syrians and returned with their agreement to the plan for a junction. The convoy was accordingly despatched to Sain Kaleh, but meanwhile the pressure of the Turks had increased and the withdrawal of the East Syrians, who had been joined by a crowd of other refugees, became a flight. Pursued by the Turks and harried on every side by Kurdish brigands and Persian villagers, they struggled on in hunger and exhaustion,

unable from lack of ammunition to make a stand against their enemies, until they met our small detachment at Sain Koleh. On that march of 120 miles thousands had dropped out and died of starvation or been massacred by their pursuers; dysentery and cholera had worked havoc in the ranks, and those who survived were in a pitiable condition. For the remaining two hundred miles to Hamadan they were protected by our men who were engaged day after day in a series of rear-guard actions until their gallant efforts finally stopped the pursuit.

Thus it was that some 50,000 refugees reached Hamadan in the middle of August, and we were confronted with the problem of providing for them at a time when our own difficulties in maintaining our Persian force were taxing the transport to the utmost, and supplies were urgently needed for the troops operating on the Tigris and the region to its north. But prompt measures were necessary to prevent a further loss of life from sickness that was rife among them; it was impossible to feed so large a number at Hamadan or to give them the medical treatment that was required; and it was decided to form a concentration camp lower down on the Persian Road within easier distance of the Advanced Base at Baghdad. The site chosen was on the right bank of the Diyalah River near the village of Ba'qubah, thirty-three miles N. E. of Baghdad. There were several reasons for its selection. The river here makes a loop to the east and encloses between its right bank and the Uthmaniyeh Canal on the west a space of ground about two miles in length and one in breadth which stand wholesomely open to the air and can be readily drained. The metre gauge railway from Baghdad to Table Mountain passes through the centre of it to a bridge over the river, and supplies can, therefore, be unloaded right into the camp; while the situation is sufficiently isolated to prevent cholera or any other epidemic that might arise in so enfeebled a population spreading beyond its limits.

At the end of August the preparations were begun, and in three weeks the camp was ready for the reception of the refugees who were then conveyed down the road and drafted into it at the rate of a thousand a day. This was no easy work, for many of them could hardly stand owing to weak-

ness ; there were many old people and young children ; and a certain number of cattle, sheep, and ponies which they had brought with them had to be accommodated also. It is two hundred and fifty miles from Hamadan to the camp, and to people in their condition the journey was trying. On their arrival it was necessary to bathe and disinfect every man, woman and child with their clothes and bedding in a segregated area, in order to get rid of vermin and prevent the spread of louse-borne diseases such as typhus and relapsing fever to which these people are especially liable. A small hospital was placed in this detention camp to deal with all cases of sickness as soon as they arrived, and more hospitals were sent up as the population of the camp increased. But the story of its development would take too long to tell and it will be better to pass on at once to a brief description of the camp as I saw it a few days ago.

III.

There are at present about 42,000 refugees in the Camp ; add to this the number of the staff looking after them and you have the population of a moderately sized town. Substitute tents for buildings ; a development according to plan for haphazard growth ; a complete organisation to meet all the needs of communal life for the chaotic result of individual or class competition ; and a town it is in every other respect, with its separate quarters and streets, its market, its churches and its railway station, standing complete and self-contained where a few months ago the desert held unchallenged sway. The camp at Ba'qubah is indeed a remarkable instance of that will "to see a job through" which has stood us in such good stead in this war. When these tens of thousands appeared at Hamadan an onlooker would have despaired of doing anything with them ; now one sees them cheery and contented, well fed and warmly clothed, thoroughly enjoying a life which must be full of strangeness to them, and submitting without a murmur to hygienic and other rules which, however familiar they may be to us, are quite novel and incomprehensible to them. This transformation is entirely the work of our army and due very largely to that wonderful product of it, the "B.O.R." or British Tommy, who seems able to adapt himself to any task, and in this case

admirably fills the part of a Father O'Flynn to his mixed flock. He does not understand a word of their languages, nor they of his ; but his innate tact, unflinching good humour and patience carry him through, and a perfect understanding is established. With the children, of course, he was bound to be an immense success ; they have learned from him how to play rounders, tip and run, and the other games that delight boyhood all the world over, and are correspondingly grateful ; but as a nurse to rather frightened old women who regarded a hospital as a place invented to kill them off quick he appeared in quite a new light. Before the arrival of the British Sisters who are now in charge of the women's wards he had to carry on in their place, and all the doctors will tell you what a marvellous nurse he made and how pleased these difficult patients were with his tender care for them. All over the camp these men are engaged constantly in duties that lie outside the scope of their ordinary work and experience, and no praise could be too high for the way in which they are performing them.

The camp is divided up into three areas, each of which is subdivided into ten or twelve sections. The camp as a whole is under the direction of a General Officer, Brigadier-General Austin, who has under him a number of British Officers, drawn from various regiments ; each area has its own commander and each section in it a British Officer in charge, assisted by five B.O.R.s, responsible for its cleanliness, discipline and welfare.

Each section consists of about fifty E.P. tents spaced out in orderly fashion, with raised pathways between, and accommodating approximately 1,250 people ; water pipes have been laid down throughout conveying to each section its own chlorinated water supply ; and there are cooking sheds, washing houses and the usual sanitary arrangements in each so that it is a perfectly self-contained unit. The refugees are allotted to areas and sections according to their races and tribes : the Armenians, for example, all live in " A " area, the east Syrians in " B " and " C " areas, and the sections of each area are made up of families who came from the same village and district in their own land. A light railway has been constructed to all parts of the camp so that supplies can be despatched from the central dump

on the main line and distributed to each section. Every tent draws its own rations from the Section Commander through a representative, and in this way each family is able to do its own cooking, an arrangement which it prefers to any communal kitchen. Plenty of good food is issued and the physical condition of the refugees has steadily improved. Those who are fit to work are employed on road construction and other duties in the camp and its vicinity, and are paid at a reasonable rate. But they do not make good labourers. The original scheme on their arrival at Hamadan was to organise the able-bodied of the males into Labour Battalions, and about seven thousand of them were retained in Persia for this purpose ; but the severe weather in the early part of November caused sickness among them and they have since all been sent down to the camp. As shepherds, however, they take an interest in their animals and look after them well ; I saw, for example, a large shelter constructed of blankets which the men preferred to use thus to keep their sheep warm saying that this was more important than their own comfort. They brought about 6,000 animals down with them, and most of these have been sent out to a farm colony twenty-five miles distant where a thousand of the refugees are in charge of them. At two other farms in the vicinity maintained by the Agricultural Department more refugees are employed as cultivators and are doing fairly good work.

Let us now make a tour of the camp starting from headquarters at its north end. Here on the bank of the river is encamped a battalion of the Devons which with a wing of an Indian Infantry regiment, the 102nd Grenadiers, furnishes the necessary guards and men for other fatigue duties. Here also is one of the pumping stations where a Gwynne Aster engine draws up water from the centre of the river and forces it through the pipes to the tanks in each section. There is another pump somewhat lower down and the pipe system is connected so that if one engine breaks down the supply will still be forthcoming. The work has been great, for there are fifteen miles of piping in the camp and the daily consumption of water distributed among the 130 tanks is 150,000 gallons ; but the health of

the refugees has been much improved by this provision of chlorinated water everywhere.

Close to headquarters is the orphanage compound where about nine hundred children are living, the Armenians on one side and the East Syrians on the other, with a big space for a playground between them where see-saws are much appreciated. The time to visit the orphans is after their dinner hour on a moonlight night when they march about in squads singing loudly, or form up in semi-circles to move slowly round in one of their national dances. Boys and girls are both as cheery as can be, utterly devoid of any shyness and remarkably quick and intelligent. The Armenians have been clothed by their Patriarch at the expense of their national funds raised in Europe and America, but the East Syrian children are entirely dependent on us and quaint little creatures they look in British uniforms cut down and dyed dark blue or green. The Red Cross has generously contributed gifts of clothing and games for them. One thinks as one sees their smiling chubby faces of all they have been through in their short lives, and hopes that they will have a happier lot than their unfortunate parents, all of whom were massacred or left to die by the road side. One small boy about fourteen years old who looks as if he had never known a care played the father to his younger brother and two infant sisters all the way down from Urmia and brought them safely in; but they all seem full of pluck if one may judge from the way they wrestle and the spirit they put in to the singing of their national war song, which has endless verses about Nineveh and the new kingdom to be created by the modern Assyrians under their Patriarch. It will be a sad day when they leave the camp and their beloved Tommies to whom every one of them is known by some name, such as Clarence or Mary Jane, which pleases them better than their own legitimate Syriac. One hears much of the Montessori and other systems of education, but after seeing the orphanage at Ba'qubah one is inclined to plump for the "direct method" as practised by the young British Officer and B.O.R.; it makes at any rate for happiness and complete confidence in the teacher. During the day more formal schooling is given

by their own priests, the instruction being in Syriac or Armenian as the case may be.

Beyond the orphanage one enters the sections of "C" area. The most distinctive types here are the mountaineers of Tiari and Tkhuma, picturesque people in their baggy trousers variegated by coloured patches and many coloured sashes. It was the Nestorian Christmas Day which falls on the 7th of January when I first visited them and all the men were playing at leap frog or dancing ; the women were busy cooking, the favourite dish being a savoury stew of rice, vegetables and bully beef. Both men and women have handsome clear-cut features and olive complexions, and when they wear, as they often do, a red handkerchief bound round the head instead of the conical hat or black turban, one might well mistake them for Neapolitan or Sicilian fisherfolk. An artist would find plenty of subjects here ; they love colour and an unconscious good taste seems to keep them from any crudity of blend.

On the other side of the main road from Baghdad are the tents of "B" area where more of the East Syrians live ; on the west of both areas runs the Uthmaniyeh Canal and this is the popular bathing place. On Saturday in preparation for the Sunday festival the whole population turns out to wash by families; none of them is embarrassed by nudity, and the scene can only be described as primitive. But no harm comes of it and the sexual problem simply does not exist among these people ; they put our own civilization to shame in this respect.

We now leave the higher ground and descend a little to the river plain enclosed by the loop mentioned before. The first place of interest is the bazaar, where various refugees and Arab traders have set up shops which are usually thronged by purchasers of fruit, vegetables, cigarettes and sweetmeats. Beyond this are the railway station and supply dump, and near the station is the detention area into which all new arrivals are first drafted for medical inspection and disinfection. The arrangements for this are most efficient ; while the refugee is washed and anointed with kerosine emulsion, his clothes and bedding are put into an oven and heated by steam to a temperature of 170 degrees ; by the time he is ready for them they are cleansed and he can go off to

the section to which he is allotted, or if sick be sent to hospital. Of these there are three in different parts of the camp besides an isolation hospital for infectious diseases. Two are Indian General Hospitals and one British. The total medical personnel amounts to over 800 : there are 52 doctors and 39 British nurses, while ten dispensaries serve the out-patients in the different areas. The wards are formed by joining up three E. P. tents and are quite comfortable; the operating theatres are equipped in the most modern style, and one of the hospitals has a complete X ray apparatus. Dysentery and small-pox were at first prevalent and caused many deaths ; but sickness has now diminished and is gradually being stamped out. The medical work has, from the beginning, being very arduous as the refugees were in such a state of weakness and malnutrition that they easily fell sick ; but the organisation of the sanitary arrangements and the careful training of the people to observe them has resulted in a distinct improvement in the general health of the camp. Over one hundred and twenty refugee girls have been taken in to assist in hospital work and trained as V.A.D. nurses ; they are quick and willing learners and look very attractive in their khaki shirts, white aprons, and red head dresses.

The Armenian area extends from the railway northward along the bank of the river ; and near it is the enclosure occupied by the American Missionaries who are working here in connection with the American Persian Relief Commission. Several of them have spent many years among the people at Urmia and their knowledge of them has been very useful to the officers of the camp ; they believe in self-help and their relief measures consist mainly in providing work for the women, girls and old men. They pay out nearly Rs. 12,000 a week in wages, and the articles made are distributed to the refugees or sold. Their compound is a busy place on a fine morning. On one side are a number of women and girls sewing garments of all kinds amid the rattle of singer machines and a babel of gossip ; on another there are old people picking over a heap of waste and stuffing mattresses and quilts ; but the chief industry is the carding and spinning of wool. The yarn is either distributed to the refugees for the knitting of stockings and socks, or sold to army contractors at Baghdad for blanket making.

Following the railway past the transport section, the works camp, and the Indian Infantry lines, we cross the bridge over the river to a separate and smaller camp, complete in itself, where the contingent of irregulars formed from the refugees is quartered. Recruiting for this Force was started in August with the idea of training a sufficient number of those refugees who had already borne arms to protect their people on the march back to their own country and British officers were placed in command of the four battalions subsequently raised. They were marched down from Persia to the camp in November and are now being refitted with uniforms. I saw the battalion of about 1,200 East Syrian mountaineers drilling and they are likely to make quite a serviceable force after more training, as they are of sturdy build and keen on the work. A cavalry section is also being formed and mounted on ponies brought down from Urmia, stocky little beasts, with thick broad tails, of the Caucasian and South Russian breed such as the Cossacks ride. The progress made is wonderful when one considers that the officers and men of the instructional staff cannot speak the language and the orders in English have to be translated by signs. But this language difficulty which would appear at first to be almost insuperable does not seem to have caused much inconvenience anywhere in the camp; in the construction of the light railway, for example, with its earthwork, plate laying and bridging of drains no orders could be given to the refugees in their own language by the Indian overseers and British Officers responsible for the work; yet everything went on smoothly and actual demonstration proved as effective as verbal guidance.

Some idea of the extent of the camp and the diversity of its activities may be conceived from this brief description. It was a stiff job which the British army took on in providing for these thousands, but it has been carried through with characteristic thoroughness. I do not venture to estimate the cost, but it must have been about the biggest scheme of charitable relief which the world has yet seen. Most of these refugees have been clothed by us and all are being fed by our supplies every day in a country where food is scarce and expensive. Figures do not convey much, but how great has been the distribution of clothing material may be judged

from the fact that we have given over 400,000 yards of unbleached and coloured calico, 60,000 blankets, 6,000 flannel shirts and other garments in proportion. In addition to the human population we have had to provide for over 6,000 animals and veterinary enclosures have been constructed at the camp to receive and treat cases of sickness among them before sending them out to the farm colonies established in the grazing areas of the district.

When we consider all we have done for these refugees the question of their future naturally arises. We do not want our work for humanity to be wasted : we have given of money and labour without stint and without expectation of any return to ourselves : but it is essential that some international arrangement shall be made for the security of these peoples when they are repatriated. Their lands have been laid waste, but are capable of recovery ; they themselves have suffered terribly, but are ready to begin life anew with hope and courage to regain their independence. It is our duty to see that the past is not repeated with all its tragic cycles of invasion and massacre, pillage and oppression. A "modus vivendi" must be established in that tract of country north of Mosul where Turk, Kurd, and Persian live side by side with Armenian and East Syrian.

The latter people are peculiarly our care. For many years the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission with its Headquarters at Amadia has given them assistance in all sorts of ways, and our Consuls at Van, Mosul and Tabriz have intervened on more than one occasion to procure them alleviation from hard treatment. But they ask now for something more than this intermittent help ; what exact form of protection can be afforded them is a matter for the Powers in Conference at Paris to decide, but I can tell you what their Patriarch Mar Shimun told me when I saw him and his sister Surma Khanum in their tent at Ba'qubah. The latter is a middle aged woman of remarkably vigorous personality and though she has never been out of her own country before speaks English well, so that we could converse freely, and the substance of our talk was this. Half a century ago the East Syrians had considerably more territory in their possession than they now hold and could be regarded as a semi-independent nation, for, though living among Kurds

they ruled themselves. Gradual encroachment has separated their communities and taken from them some of the richest of their lands ; their present poverty and helplessness against the aggression of their neighbours is the result of this loss alike of land and of cohesion. The responsibility for the state of anarchy now existing in their part of the world lies wholly with the Turks, but the British Government is implicated in the cause, for it was at our suggestion that this portion of Kurdistan, known as Hakkiari, was taken over by Turkey in the decade which followed the massacres of 1840. It was thought then that a recurrence of disorder would be prevented by the establishment of a settled rule in the land ; the Turks had not at that time the bad name which they have since acquired, and the natural course was to put them in as guardians of the peace. But our trust was misplaced and the Turks abused it by acts of oppression and misrule which are too well known to need relation here ; we cannot undo the mischief done, but we can and must make its repetition impossible. It is obvious that the Turk must go ; but who is to take his place ? An arrangement between Kurd and East Syrian might in the past have been feasible, but recent events have embittered racial and religious feelings and neither could now live contented under the rule of the other ; but even now they might rest at peace with one another under a stronger rule than either could supply. That is the solution which Mar Shimun advocates and he asks for a British Protectorate for some years to come. Under this, both races, he believes, would settle down, since the lawless elements would soon realise that defiance would set in motion forces which they could not resist, and the recognition of this power behind it would give the administration an authority which no local ruler can possess. He does not wish for a kingdom of his own, though he would like to see some of their old lands restored to his people ; but he does regard this measure of protection as vital. It need not last for ever ; it need not be expensive to work ; but he makes his appeal to the British nation not to leave the East Syrians without it, for his conviction is that their welfare and even their existence as a people depends upon it. "

