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Armenia's Children

A WOMAN'S VISITS TO THE REFUGEE CAMPS

FLEET STREET, SATURDAY.

Mrs. Glanville, an Australian woman now in London, leaves next week for America, where she is to lecture in many cities on behalf of the Armenian refugees. Then she goes on the same mission to the Philippines, to South Africa, and to Japan, where the Armenians have many friends, and perhaps she will also visit China. The tour has been hastily arranged by the International Near East Association, which represents twenty-one countries, and Mrs. Glanville has not yet got over her surprise at the invitation.

She explained to a "Manchester Guardian" representative that it resulted from a speech she made at a meeting of the International Near East Association held a few days ago at Geneva. She is hon. secretary of the Armenian Association, which she founded four years ago and which now has branches in every State. "My son was killed at Gallipoli," she said, "and when I heard how the Armenians had suffered at the hands of the Turks I felt that I who had also suffered should do my best to help them." As part of her propaganda she showed films, and a very effective one entitled "Uncle Australia Sees it Through" showed the Armenian boys in an orphanage near Beyrout which is supported by Australian funds.

This year Mrs. Glanville decided that she must see for herself how the refugees were faring and that she would be contented with nothing less than a visit to the refugees in Greece, Syria, Palestine, and Constantinople. It was her account of her travels and observations, told in a simple, straightforward way, recognising the tragedies that have occurred and are occurring, but stressing the need for constructive work, that made her audience feel they could best help the Armenians by getting her to tell the same story in other countries.

One thing that has impressed Mrs. Glanville tremendously is the fact that a poverty-stricken country like Greece and a country like Syria, still poorer and tormented by internal strife, can so kindly accept the presence of vast numbers of penniless,

hopeless aliens. Many other countries, she feels, would especially resent the growth of the huge camps whose lack of sanitation makes them a menace to the community. She was also impressed by the kindness the refugees show to each other.

DISTRESS IN THE CAMPS.

She was distressed with the miserable conditions in which the refugees were living in the first country she visited. "Had I gone only to Greece," she said, "I should have gone home with stories of their terrible sufferings, though the Greeks, who are so very poor themselves, are doing their best for the Armenians. But I found much more distress at Aleppo and Beyrout because of the war. There are 80,000 Armenian women and children in Syria. Their one consolation is that, even though they are starving, they are safe from the Turks, and that is the great thing. They hear stories of what is still happening to the Armenians who have not escaped. In the Caucasus, again, where they are living under Bolshevik rule, they are ready to submit to all restrictions because they are safe from the Turks."

Six miles from Beyrout is the Australian orphanage, where Mrs. Glanville was received by the thousand little Armenian orphan boys with such enthusiasm that she said it made her feel like the Queen of Sheba. She spent some days there enjoying the sight of the boys at play or at work in the workshops. They are taught many trades and handicrafts, such as tailoring, carpet weaving, metal work, cabinet making, and so on. The idea is to fit them for industrial life, but when she questioned them she usually found that the boys wanted to become doctors or teachers or clerks. Their ages ranged from six to fourteen, and it distressed her to know that after fourteen the orphanage could not provide for them. Some of them inevitably drifted back to the camps, which are already crowded with hopeless little boys.

THE WAR AREAS OF SYRIA.

From Beyrout Mrs. Glanville, accompanied by the director of the orphanage and an Armenian lad who spoke good Arabic, travelled right through Syria to Aleppo. It was an exciting journey. There were few other civilian passengers on the short train. They had an armed guard, travelled slowly, and had plenty of time to note that most of the railway stations had been destroyed. The country was full of French troops. Every few miles they came to a military camp and the train would be held up while

the passengers were interrogated. From what Mrs. Glanville heard she was convinced that, unless peace came to Syria before the winter, the conditions would be terrible and thousands of people must die. Already industry was almost at a standstill and because of the unrest and disturbances the usual visitors were afraid to enter the country so the summer resorts were deserted. When she went to Aleppo, where fifteen thousand refugees were encamped, she visited several of the camps and Miss Jeppe at Neutral House and one of Miss Jeppe's farm villages, but she could not see as much as she wished because after nightfall the roads were unsafe.

Mrs. Glanville does not stress the most sensational aspect of the tragedies, though she heard so much of what the women have been through. Incidentally she reported that thousands of the Armenian men have married their victimised countrywomen. Her great appeal is for the constructive work that must be done. She is eager to get the orphan children now in the camps into orphanages where they can be cared for and trained. And she has a wonderful dream for the future of the thousand little orphan boys in Australia's orphanage. If only Australia would adopt them!

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ARMENIAN WOMEN
IN TURKEY.

Story of Rescue Work.

MISS KAREN JEPPE'S
APPEAL FOR FUNDS.

(From our London Staff.)

FLEET STREET, THURSDAY.

That figure of romance around whom legends are already gathering, Miss Karen Jeppe, has just arrived in London to raise a fund for her work of rescuing Armenian women and children from captivity in Moslem homes. During the five years since she was appointed League of Nations Commissioner for the protection of Armenian women and children Miss Jeppe, who perfected a system of getting in touch with them, has rescued 1,400 women from Moslem harems. Hitherto she has received an annual grant of £1,800 from the League, but the Assembly decided this year that it could not afford to continue the grant, and Miss Jeppe agreed to carry on the work with voluntary subscriptions. Her sympathisers have always given generously, and now she wants to increase their number. By the end of another year she believes she will have reached all the women who can be brought back to their friends.

Miss Jeppe, who is a Danish woman, told a "Manchester Guardian" representative how, as a teacher in Denmark, she became interested in the story of the Armenians, and went to work in Urfu at an Armenian Orphanage and Industrial School. When

early in the war the Turks descended on the district the orphans were sent away, and presently it became impossible to keep on with the school. But she stayed on for two years, and she was there during the terrible months from spring till autumn, when the Urdu roads saw the flight of the Armenians driven and harried by the Turks.

Driving Them to Death.

She witnessed the most horrible sights, starving Armenian women and children throwing themselves on the body of a dead donkey, tearing it to pieces and devouring it; Turkish children worrying little Armenians till they died in the road; exhausted people falling on all fours and crawling along—still driven—till they also died among the other dead people who strewed the roads; and at last a long train of women and girls naked driven on and on. "Where were the people going?" said Miss Jeppe in answer to a question. "To death. That was the policy, to drive them till they dropped. Many of the women and girls who were seized and carried off by the Moslems killed themselves at the first opportunity. Often the attack would take place near a river and then they would drown themselves." The Armenian women, she said, had always lived in dread of the Moslem men. To fall into their hands was the most terrible fate they could imagine.

Miss Jeppe did what she could to feed the refugees, but it was a hopeless task. She became very ill and spent many months in bed, but nevertheless she managed to hide ten Armenian men in her house and keep them there for a long time undiscovered by the Turks, who searched the house carefully three times. Finally she contrived to smuggle them away to the mountains, living with them there, and one by one she placed them in safety. They are all alive to-day. It would have been easy to effect their escape if she had been well, she said, but as most of the time she was in bed suffering from nervous prostration it was very difficult. At the end of the war Miss Jeppe went back to Denmark, where she had to rest completely for two years. Then she returned to the East, not to Urfu, because it was in the hands of the Turks, and she would not go where they were. She began to start industries for the refugee Armenians at Aleppo, and was happily engaged in that work when the League of Nations, which had set up

a Commission to inquire into the fate of the Armenian women, asked her to undertake the work of rescue. She fully realised the difficulty of the task, and this suggestion came as a shock, but she accepted the duty and made her arrangements.

The first person rescued was an Armenian boy of 14 who had been carried off as a boy of seven to a Bedouin village, forbidden to speak a word of Armenian, and employed by his captor as a cowherd. When the pioneer rescuers brought him to the refuge he sat in the middle of the room laughing with delight as he listened to Miss Jeppe and her helpers talking in his native tongue. They could not understand how he had retained his knowledge of it till he explained that when he was alone with the cows he used to talk to them in Armenian. He constantly recited the Lord's Prayer, and, when no one was looking he used to write the 36 letters of the Armenian alphabet with a stick on the ground, carefully obliterating the letters afterwards.

Afraid to Escape

It was some months after she began her work before any Armenian woman would take the risk of escaping to Miss Jeppe's shelter. They did not believe the stories carried into the harems by her helpers, and feared it was a device of the slave dealers. But after four months some woman ventured and they sent word back to their friends that it was safe to come away. It was easier for the boys to escape—they could run across the desert and hide in caves, but the flight of the women was often very difficult.

Special attention is paid to the women in the villages. The life of the city is apt to be demoralising, and the women who have lived in a harem in the city are often rather spoilt. But those in the villages are a very fine type; when they refuse to escape it is because the man has married them or they have children whom they will not leave. Miss Jeppe said that the Moslem men loved Christian women more than the women of their own race. The British soldiers in Mesopotamia rescued a number of Armenian women. A deputation of Turks came and asked how they could become Christians and so get the women back. But the tragedy of the Armenian woman in a Moslem home was that the Moslem men had so little respect for women. The Christian husband held his wife in respect as the

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mother of his children and the housewife. The Moslem placed her on the lowest level, valuing her only for her sex. The Christian marriage did not contemplate a possible divorce, but the Moslem easily dismissed his wife and drove the mother from her children, eager to take a new woman. It was the nomad tribes who branded their Armenian captives, not as an insult, but because it was their custom to brand the women of their households. The humiliation was felt so deeply by the Armenians that many of them could not endure the thought of going to their friends bearing on their faces the stigma of a shameful life.