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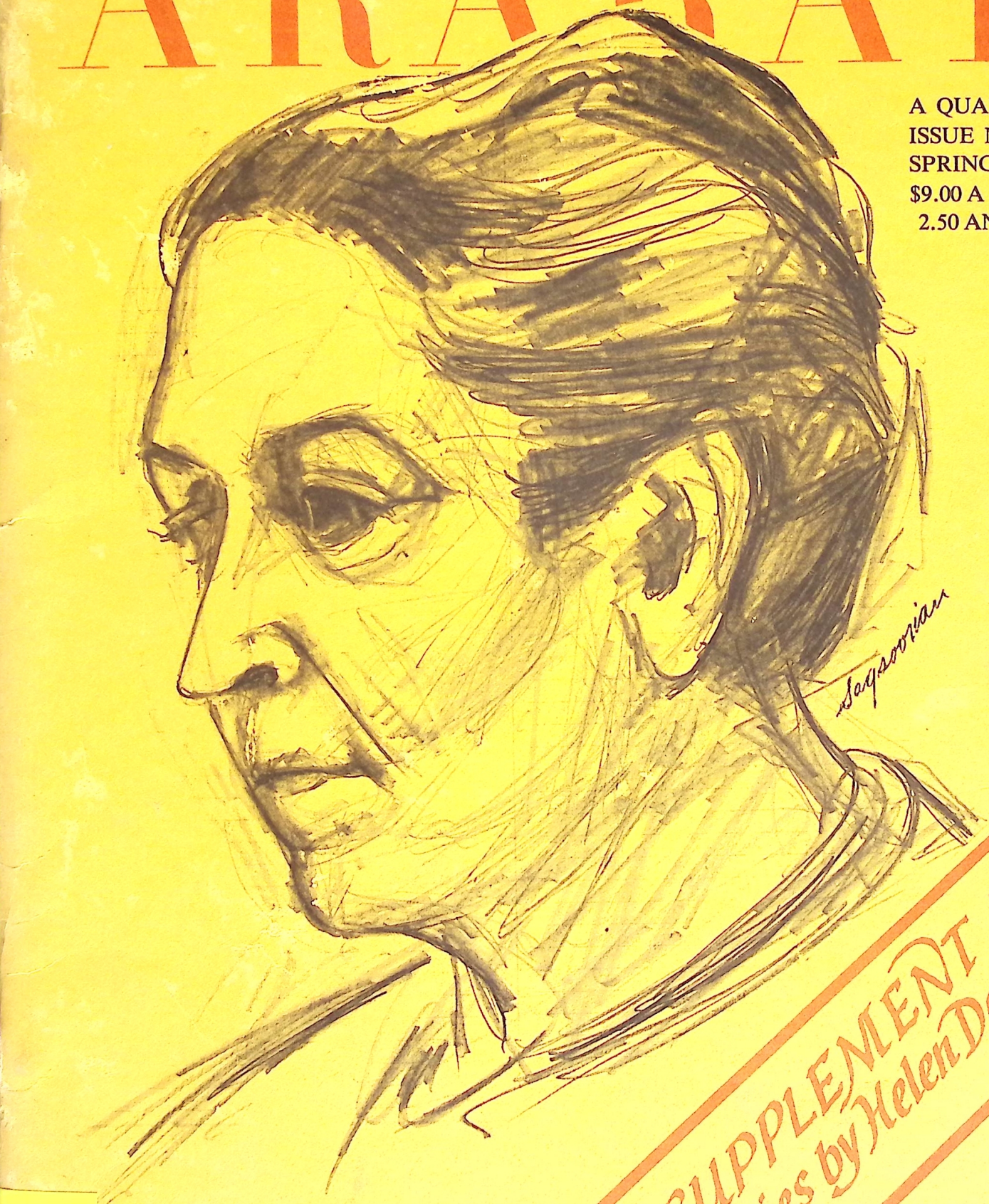

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Stories by Helen Davidian

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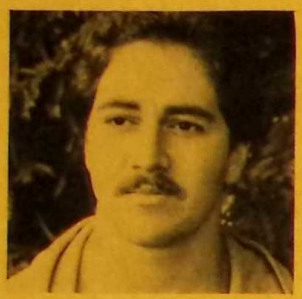

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Leonardo Alishan teaches at the Middle East Center of the University of Utah and lives with his wife and children in Salt Lake City. His stories, poems, and articles have appeared and will continue to appear in *Ararat*....**Mark Arax** was born and raised in Fresno and is presently studying at the Columbia School of Journalism. He is preparing a piece for *Ararat* on his illustrious grandfather....**Ara Baliozian** has recently seen two books off the press, his revised version of *The Armenians* (Ararat Press) and his translation of Gostan Zarian (Ashod Press)....**G.H. Chopourian** is the executive director of the Armenian Missionary Association of America based in Paramus, New Jersey....**Diana Der Hovanessian** shows no signs of flagging in energy or inspiration. Most recently her poetry appeared in *The Literary Review* (Spring 1980)....**Alice Ezegelyan** lives and teaches not far from Buenos Aires. Her article about the Armenians in Argentina appeared in the Winter 1976 issue of *Ararat*....**Vahe Funduklian** lives in Manchester, England and is the Chairman of AGBU local chapter....**Judith Halloran** is from Ann Arbor, Michigan. She writes: "My poem grew out of my romance with an American-born Armenian, who is strongly tied to his heritage. He led me to an appreciation of his culture, and to a growing awareness of the tension between the process of integration and the need to maintain an Armenian identity. My friend's parents were *very* opposed to his involvement with a non-Armenian. Ultimately the pressures of this conflict became too great for him to bear and he bid me farewell"....**Maurice Hewlett** was an English critic and author. The piece on Emin is from *The London Mercury* of 1922....**Dikran Karagueuzian** is the author of *Blow It Up: The Black Student Strike at San Francisco State and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa* (Gambit, Boston, 1971), reviewed by Kay Boyle in the Summer 1971 issue of *Ararat,* and the editor of the *Armenian Guardian.* He lives in Kensington, California....**James Magorian** lives in Lincoln, Nebraska. His several chapbooks of poetry will be reviewed in the next issue of *Ararat*....**Anna Lisa Soorikian** lives in Leonia, New Jersey and works for an advertising agency in New York City....Born in Vienna, where he obtained degrees in the areas of Agricultural Science and Engineering, **Edgar Taschdjian** worked and taught in Brazil, California, France, Ethiopia, China, and Germany as well as in New York and the Haigazian College in Beirut. He lives in Ozone Park, New York with his wife, Claire, the author of *The Peking Man Is Missing* (Harper and Row, 1977), reviewed in the Spring 1978 issue of *Ararat* by Peter Sourian....**Vahan Teryan** was born in Ganza, Georgia in 1885 and educated in Moscow. After the October Revolution in 1917, he worked in Armenian affairs until his death in 1920....**Ruth Thomasian** is a New York City artist and historian who has created project SAVE to preserve recent Armenian history through costume and photograph. She recently received a grant from the Alex Manoogian Cultural Fund to promote awareness of Armenian culture....**Gostan Zarian** is one of Armenia's greatest novelists. An article about his friendship with Lawrence Durrell appeared in the Winter 1972 issue of *Ararat.*

Vahram Mavian is the director of the Department of Armenian Studies of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon, Portugal. A poet, prose writer and journalist, he is the author of four books: *Armenian Flotsam* (1965), *Random Diary* (1968) *There Are Armenians Everywhere* and *Smouldering Souls* (1977). One of his stories in translation appeared in the Fall, 1979 issue. His name was inadvertently omitted from the Contributors' Page. We apologize for the omission.

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Stamps in Armenia

By Edgar Taschdjian

Historians are beginning to realize that stamps are an important source of historical information. They can provide interesting and sometimes important information about the society from which they originate, about its concerns at a given moment in time, and about the events and personalities which they commemorate.

The first concern of the historian studying a stamp must be to ascertain its authenticity. For this purpose not only the stamp itself, but the envelope to which it is affixed, the post-office cancellation and, if possible, the contents of the letter are relevant. In general, the information obtainable from a stamp must always be evaluated in the total context of other available information. That a Turkish stamp is printed in Vienna or a Chinese stamp in London says something about the development of the graphic industry in the respective countries. If a German or a Brazilian stamp costs a hundred or a thousand times more than in previous years, this says something about the rate of inflation in the country. Sometimes information concerning one country is obtainable from stamps issued by another country. For instance, a French stamp with the overprint "O.M.F.Cilicie" documents the presence of French troops in Cilicia. A woodcock depicted on a Russian stamp provides information about the fauna of the Caucasus.

The significance of a stamp's design lies not only in what it depicts, but also in what it does not depict. In other words, the choice of the design from among all



other possible designs reveals the concerns and philosophies of the state which issues the stamp. Obviously, a Vatican stamp will not commemorate Karl Marx nor will an Austrian commemorate the execution of Italian irredentist revolutionaries. Changes in design and overprints on a previous design indicate changes in political situations. For instance, the appearance and subsequent disappearance of the "U.A.R." inscription on Egyptian stamps documents the short-lived existence of the "United Arab Republic," and an intentional smudge obliterating Hitler's head documents the presence of Russian troops in Austria.

With these points in mind, let us examine whatever information is available on stamps about Armenia and Armenians. There are seven different sources which, in one way or another, are relevant for our purpose. These are (a) stamps issued by the Armenian Republic before and after its sovietization; (b) Russian stamps; (c) Vatican stamps; (d) Portuguese stamps; (e) French stamps; (f) Turkish stamps; and (g) Lebanese stamps.

Let us begin with the issues of the National Republic from 1919 till 1920. They consist of Tsarist Russian stamps overprinted with the Armenian letter "z" (the initial letter of "Hayasdan"). The overprints are hand-stamped in violet or black ink. The denominations range from 2 kopeks to 100 rubles and indicate the progressive inflation resulting from the struggle fought by the fledgling republic on three fronts. Some of the



The Most Valuable of all Armenian stamps (present catalogue value: about $200). Courtesy of Edgar Taschdjian.

stamps are on thin cardboard instead of paper and there are postal savings stamps and Russian semipostal stamps, the latter used for ordinary postage. In 1920 a set of three designs, one depicting Mount Ararat, one depicting a standing eagle bearing a sword, and one showing a spinning woman was prepared but never issued. These stamps bear on top the inscription "Hayasdani Hanrabedutiun" in Armenian script and "Armenia" in Latin script at the bottom.

With the sovietization of Armenia in 1921, all the stamps bear the Soviet five-pointed star and/or the hammer and sickle, but the inscriptions are in Armenian and the designs show Armenian historical symbols, views, and buildings. Mount Ararat is featured again in Nos. 288, 300, 340-43; Mt. Alaghiaz and the plain of Shirak are shown in No. 286; the ruined city of Ani is shown in a 15,000-ruble stamp, No. 291. The river Arax is shown in No. 287; a woman at a well and a village scene are the topic of Nos. 338-339. Of special historical interest are a number of mythological symbols: Nos. 282, 284, and 292 depict winged monsters from ancient monuments, and design A28 shows a harpy surrounded incongruously by the slogan "Proletarians of all Nations, Unite!" The long-necked crane called "Gronk" in Armenian, the subject of a song in which a refugee expresses longing for his homeland, inspires the design of A26.

Among Russian stamps dealing with Armenian themes, there is first an ethnographic series depicting the various peoples of the Soviet Union, issued during April 1933, in which the Armenians figure as a member of a group of Transcaucasians (No. 502). On December 1, 1953, a four-kopek stamp honoring Commissar Shaumyan was issued, and in October 1940, a view of the Armenian Pavilion at the All-Union Agricultural Fair was printed together with pavilions from other nationalities in one sheet. The Armenian writer Khachatur Abovian (1809-1848) is commemorated on the occasion of the centenary of his death in two stamps issued on October 16, 1948, but the inscription is in Russian. On November 29, 1950, a set of three stamps was issued on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Armenian Republic. The first represents a scene from the grape harvest at the foot of Mt. Ararat, the second the government building in Yerevan, and the third the birth of the playwright G. M. Sundukian. This issue has inscriptions in both Armenian and Russian.

Another view of an Armenian pavilion at the Agricultural Fair of 1955 (No. 1775) shows the Armenian flag in actual colors. A year later this was followed on February 25, 1956, by another stamp in honor of Abovian on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth. The painter G. Bashindchagian is portrayed on No. 1953 issued in 1957 and the poet Charents on No. 2038, issued March 1958. What is interesting about these selections is not only whom they commemorate, but also whom they do not. For instance, the internationally known composer Khachadurian was not deemed worthy of a stamp.

A set of stamps issued on October 25, 1957, on the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution contains one (No. 2009) showing fruits and a power line on a background of Armenian mountains. No. 2128 (1958) and 2394 (November 14, 1960) show two views of Yerevan and No. 2425 shows an Armenian folk costume.

In spite of all the antireligious emphasis of the official party line, the role of religion in Armenian history is documented in two important stamps. The first (No. 2601 of May 27, 1962) depicts St. Mesrob in conjunction with the Armenian alphabet he created and No.

3645 (September 18, 1969) portrays the Armenian composer Komitas who collected Armenian folk tunes.

The Armenian script appears again in No. 2664 (November 17, 1962) commemorating the 250th anniversary of the poet Sayat Nova (1712-1795). Joining stamps honoring General Tukhachevsky and other heroes of the Soviet army is one (No. 2706) celebrating U. M. Avetisian.

Two writers, Stefan Nazaryan (1814-1879) and Manuk Apeghian are honored in Nos. 2896B and 3062 and the poet Hagop Hagopian joins them in No. 3064.

Commissar Stepan Shaumyan, who was honored in 1940, is again recalled on No. 3515 (1968-70), and No. 3633 combines Armenian and Russian inscriptions with a portrait of the poet Hovannes Tumanian against an Armenian background. Mt. Ararat, together with a view of the monument of David of Sassoun, were issued as Nos. 3524 and 3525 on the occasion of the 2,750th anniversary of the capital of Yerevan, on October 18, 1968.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Armenian Soviet Republic is commemorated in No. 1799, depicting an Armenian woman together with symbols of agriculture and industry and bearing inscriptions in both Armenian and Russian. In the same year (1970), stamp No. 3768 commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of Yerevan University.

The great painter Martiros Saryan and his painting of the Armenian composer A. Spendiarov (1871-1928) were honored by issue No. 3877 on July 14, 1971, and a mountain landscape by the same painter is reproduced in No. 4106, issued August 22, 1973. His portrait of the poet Avedik Issaakyan (1875-1957) bears inscriptions in both Armenian and Russian script and the same holds for No. 4393 issued for the birth sesquicentennial of the playwright Gabriel Sundukian. A painting called *Spring,* showing a girl and a landscape, by another painter, O. Zardaryan, appears in No. 4232, issued August 20, 1974.

It may say something about the retiring nature of Anastas Mikoyan, which enabled him to survive all the vicissitudes of party politics, that there is, so far, no stamp in his honor, although No. 3679 features the MIG-10 helicopter, designed by his brother. The party worker Kamo (pseudonym of S.A. Der Petrosian) joins Aleksandra Kollontai and Georgy Chicherin in a three-stamp issue (Nos. 3958-3960). Other recent issues with Armenian themes show the flag, crest, and capital of Armenia, and Armenian architecture from the fourth century to the present.

As mentioned earlier, information about one people may often be contained, intentionally or unintentionally, in documents issued by another. Armenians do not figure as such on Turkish stamps but events significant of Armenian history can be found documented there. Turkish stamp issues have a curious way of presenting cultural artifacts produced by non-Turkish people as if they were part of the Turkish cultural heritage. A typical example is the church of St. Sophia depicted in No. 1177. This site has relevance for Armenian history insofar as it is connected with the role of those Byzantine emperors who were of Armenian origin. The conquest of Kars in 1064 by the Seljuk leader Alp Arslan is depicted in No. 1626-27; in the foreground of the Kars hill fortress stands a church of typical Armenian style.

More recent events in Anatolia are documented in French stamps issued during the years 1919-1920. A Turkish stamp of the A41 design of May 29, 1916, representing the old General Post Office in Constantinople, is overprinted with the inscription "T.E.O.Cilicie"; the letters are the initials of "Territoires Ennemis Occupés." French stamps of the sower type A21 and of the Liberty and Peace design A18 were overprinted with "O.M.F.Cilicie" and a valuation in piastres. The O.M.F. stands for "Occupation Militaire Francaise." It was this French expeditionary force which rescued the survivors of Musa Dagh by evacuating them to Alexandretta. From there they migrated to Lebanon where they settled on some marshy land near Baalbek which they drained and where they built the village of Anjar. The Lebanese stamp C511 shows some Roman ruins near this Armenian settlement, issued September 25, 1967. Another stamp issued in 1962 shows, as one of a number of Lebanese fruits, the apricot, *Prunus armeniaca,* which is said to have been brought to the West by the Roman general Lucullus during his Persian campaign (c.359).

Since a considerable number of Armenians belong to the Armenian-Catholic rite, it is not surprising that the Vatican is interested in their fate and that the Vatican Post Office has issued stamps illustrating Armenian church history. A set of four stamps (Nos. 545-548) represent respectively the church of St. Hripsime, an Armenian khatchkar of cross-stele; the Armenian St. Nerses Shnorali; and Noah's ark with a dove and rainbow.

Final mention in this survey goes to Portuguese stamps (Nos. 953-954) which portray Mr. Calouste Gulbenkian, the discoverer of the Mossul oil fields and the founder of the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Three Poems

By Vahan Teryan

Sentimental Song (1905)

Do you remember the forest, the stream
That was like a fairy tale, a dream,
And the silent evening's voiceless speech?
Do you remember? It was far, far away.

Do you remember the shining earth
That smiled in loving, eternal mirth?
How the spring sang with magical power:
Do you remember the stream and the forest?

Do you remember the night coming on—
Stream and wood—like a fairy tale—
Do you remember—far, far away. . .
Life. Grim ravine of eternal cries.

Street Song (1909)

The sad song sung by a wandering singer sounds
Down beneath my window.
How many times have I heard it before!
So it seems as though I had woven that song;
You would think it was I who cried in that song;
You would think I was singing that song out of longing for you.

Farewell Ghazal (1917)

Every moment in love I say sadly, farewell.
In my fiery heart to the blazing sun I sing, farewell.

Farewell, I say to all men fair and foul;
To Adam's orphaned, grieving son I say, farewell.

I say farewell, friends far and near,
And to my alert and wicked foes, farewell.

To the blue of the sky and the green of the sea and the forest trees
Deep, dark beneath the lambent clouds of spring, farewell.

My thorns, my nights, the larks and golden links
Of memories still in the meadow, farewell.

Flowers still folded and souls yet unfired:
To the lithe children I cry, farewell,

For I cross to the dark land, the far land. I'll not come again,
Remember me well. Farewell.

(Translated by James Russell)

Vahan Teryan was born in the village of Gandza, near Akhalkalaki, Georgia, in 1885. Educated in Moscow, he read French Symbolist poetry and participated in student revolutionary activities. After the October Revolution of 1917, Teryan worked in the Armenian section of the Ministry for Nationality Affairs of the new Soviet government. He died of tuberculosis in 1920 and is buried in Orenburg, Russia. Teryan's poetry is gentle and dreamy, permeated by a lyric sadness; his first collection of poems, *Mt'nšati anurjner (Dreams of Twilight),* which received instant critical acclaim when it was published in 1908, was followed by the first volume of his verses in 1912. Hovhannes Tumanyan praised the poet, and Yeghishe Charents acknowledged Teryan as one of the most important influences on his own writing. A critical edition of Teryan's works in three volumes was published in Erevan in 1960.

Investments

By Dikran Karagueuzian

Varouj came to America when his father decided that Lebanon would never be the same after the Civil War, whenever it ended. The elderly man had given his son sixty thousand dollars to buy a business; on that basis, Varouj obtained his green card. With a son in America, his father had reasoned, the rest of the family would have a place to go if the business and five-story apartment house in Beirut were leveled.

After visiting acquaintances already settled in New York and California, Varouj decided on Quick Print and Copy, a block away from the University in Berkeley. The broker, who was also an immigrant from Beirut, told him that the shop would pay off his fifty-two-thousand-dollar investment in approximately five years, even if he only continued to do the same amount of business as the seller.

Now, after almost a year in business and none of the investment recovered, Varouj stood in front of an angry customer, pleading with him to be patient.

"We can't predict the machine. When it is broken, it is broken. We are obliged to wait for the service man," Varouj said. Sometimes these little lies annoyed him. He felt they were degrading. Customers generally accepted his excuses, but this man ignored everything Varouj was able to come up with.

"Look, if you had any doubt about getting finished on time you shouldn't have accepted this job. I could have taken it someplace else," the customer said.

"We can give it to you in one hour," Varouj responded, not knowing whether the job could be done in such a short time.

"Look, I can give you fifteen minutes. That's all."

"But, sir. . ."

"I've been bringing my business to this shop for ten years," the customer interrupted, "and it was never like this until you took over. You don't know what you're doing. I'll have to take my business somewhere else."

Varouj felt insulted. Even if they didn't want to come into his shop again, they didn't have to be so arrogant.

Grabbing the man by the wrist, Varouj shoved the package containing the original under his customer's arm and abruptly brought down the wrist.

"Take your business," he yelled. With trembling hands, he motioned the customer to get out, uttering words that didn't make sense.

"You'll hear from me," said the man as he stepped out the door.

"You'll hear from me, too!" Swearing in Armenian, he turned around and noticed Brad, who was looking on in amusement.



Varouj had hired Brad three months earlier because he had seemed easygoing—an attitude more familiar to Varouj than that of the rigid employees who had come with the shop. But a few weeks after Brad had started work, he began to complain, "Man, this isn't the old country," every time Varouj wanted him to print something quickly in between bigger jobs. "You can't exploit

your employees like this." Recently, he had also stopped printing some jobs because of what he termed "unclear and inadequate instructions."

Determined that he was not going to let Brad's insolence pass this time, Varouj asked, "Why you didn't finish that job?"

"I was going to, but you gave me something else to do."

"That was this morning. One hour of work."

"But you didn't tell me. . ."

"What you mean, 'You didn't tell me?' You have enough mind to know that when work is finished you do the next job."

After scanning the shop, Brad lowered his head to Varouj's and whispered, "I can't read your mind. You have to convey your instructions to me clearly."

"Convey?" Varouj asked.

"This is your place of business. . ."

"Place of business?"

"Let me finish. You have to tell me what you want done."

"What I want? What I want is that you get out of my business."

"You mean your shop?"

"My shop, my business. . . get out."

"Am I being fired?"

"Goddamn right," Varouj yelled.

"May I ask why?"

"Get out! Get out!"

"Easy, man, don't touch me."

Varouj was shaking, and he grew even more upset when Brad said he had to be paid all the salary that was due him. After one of the other employees, trying vainly to calm Varouj, told him that he really had to come up with the total amount, he gave in; but he had to tear up several checks before he was able to write one correctly.

After that day, Varouj's relationship with his employees was even more uneasy. He had never felt comfortable playing the role of boss. Three years' experience in his father's clothing store was of no use. His father had always conducted his business in Beirut without making much effort because the workers didn't need constant instruction. Here, Varouj was not even sure how to communicate with his employees. He feared that making requests would diminish his authority but also that giving specific orders would irritate people like Brad.

Now, about two weeks after Brad had been fired, Varouj had to think for a long time about exactly how he should approach the two printers—one of them Brad's replacement—who had stayed late to finish up the biggest order he'd had since taking over the shop. Varouj could remember how ashamed he'd once felt of his father when he had seen him give an old employee a hundred-pound note. In Varouj's presence, the old man had thanked his boss several times, each time bowing in deep gratitude. A man who could have been his grandfather showing such humility over a sum that didn't mean a thing to his employer made Varouj want to flee in tears. Over the years, he had come to understand his father's position better, but a residue of the original shame occasionally still surfaced. Now, many years later, he finally decided to close the shop for the night and, at the last minute, when they were all ready to leave, to invite them for a drink. After putting up the "Closed" sign, he turned around to face Paul and Steve who were coming from the back of the shop.

"How about a drink?" Varouj asked.

"Have you got something stashed away?" Paul said with a quiet laugh. "Is that what you do when you lock yourself in your office?"

Varouj joined in their laughter. As soon as it was quiet again, he said, "I mean at Kip's." Then he added, "My wife and girls went to see friends from Lebanon."

"I could stand a drink," Paul volunteered.

Over the beer, Varouj grew annoyed when the conversation kept coming back to the job they had just finished printing and binding.

"Did you notice any of that stuff in the book?" Paul asked.

Varouj interrupted. "How is the new ink? It's working o.k.?"

"No problems," Paul replied. A part-time student, he had on occasion expressed opinions about corporations and management that Varouj considered socialistic.

To Varouj's annoyance, Paul took up the subject of the book again. "A simple collection of names and addresses," he said. "A rip-off."

"As far as I understand it," Steve began, "it's a world directory of raw materials. If an American manufacturer can't get what he needs through his regular supplier, he consults Atkins' book and arranges a shipment through his 'associates,' I think he calls them."

"I did not understand it at first," Varouj said carefully. He was thinking that if what Steve said were true, Atkins' business did not rely on American gullibility, after all.

Ordering another pitcher of beer, Varouj announced that his family should be back home by now and left the restaurant.

Coming into the shop the next morning to go over the neatly arranged boxes and check the bill, Varouj found no errors. $4,953.64. He found the sixty-four cents, even the three dollars amusing. In Lebanon,

asking the customer for those few pennies when he was paying nearly five thousand dollars would be considered cheap. Not that this customer would notice the pennies, at least judging from the way he had placed his order a little over a week ago. He had walked into the shop in a great hurry and asked to see the manager.

"There is no manager here. I am the owner," Varouj had said.

The customer had grabbed Varouj's hand firmly. "I am Dr. Atkins," he said. "My secretary called this afternoon about reproducing my book. Can you have the job ready for me by this weekend?"

Noting the size of the package Atkins set on the counter, Varouj remembered that the previous owner of the shop had advised him to turn down large orders because the place wasn't geared for them. I can always reorganize around the job, Varouj decided.

"How many pages?" he asked.

"About five hundred," Atkins had said in a low voice.

"How many copies?"

"Three hundred."

"Then this must be printed, no, not copied," Varouj said. He began to explain the difference between copying and printing, careful to use a few trade words he had picked up from salesmen.

Atkins interrupted. "You do what you think best. Now, can you deliver the copies to my office on Saturday?"

"Excuse me," Varouj mumbled. Stalling, he went to the back of the shop and asked Paul in a whisper if he knew anything about Atkins' order. Varouj tried to calculate the worth of the job, but he was too excited. Then he decided that what he should be doing was figuring out whether he could finish the work in three days. Even if he tied up all three machines and had his printers work overtime, there was the question of assembling the whole thing and binding it. All this was becoming too complicated, he thought.

Atkins said, "Can you get me, say, fifty copies of the book by Saturday and deliver the rest by next week?"

"Yes," Varouj snapped. Trying to regain a business-like manner, he added, "Thank you, sir."

Now, the whole job completed, Varouj entered Atkins' outer office and saw a receptionist's desk on which there was nothing but a telephone. On the wall, around two prints of the San Francisco skyline, were several documents. Varouj stood his loaded hand truck in the middle of the office and walked over to study the documents. One was an honorary Ph.D. degree for services rendered to the import-export community of Houston, Texas, awarded by Harold Arlington College. The only familiar name he saw was "Kuwait" on a document with a golden seal at the bottom, given in appreciation for work Atkins had done for a contracting firm.

When Varouj heard footsteps behind him, he tried to take on a casual air. Turning, he saw a blonde woman wearing a flowered dress. She was leaning an elbow on her waist, holding a freshly lit cigarette to her lips. Noticing her gentle smile, he began to conclude that she was not only attractive but also pleasant; but then he noticed her legs, which were so thick and shapeless that there was little difference between the ankles and the knees.

"I have brought the books, and I wonder where you want me that I put them," he said.

"Let me find out."

A short time later, she reentered the room and slowly walked to another door in the office. It was a closet containing nothing but a few wire coat hangers.

"You can put them here," she said.

After he had brought in the last haul, Varouj deliberately let out a sigh. He told her, "These boxes are very heavy." She smiled and returned to the magazine she had left on the desk.

Then Varouj said, "Excuse me, please. Here is the bill." Just as she looked up again, still smiling, Atkins flung open the door, walked in quickly, and addressed Varouj. "I see you've completed the job. Thank you for getting them out so quickly. I have to take some with me to Bangladesh tomorrow. So you want me to sign the shipping invoice? Never mind. She can sign it. I'd better be going."

Varouj stood in the middle of the room, holding the bill in one hand and resting the other on the hand truck. Suddenly he realized that he wasn't going to be paid. He ran into the hallway. Finding Atkins gone, Varouj rushed back into the office and asked, "He is not going to pay today? Can you pay? He cannot charge this job because you do not have a charge account."

Beginning to sweat, Varouj decided that he would take the books back to the shop—he would not give them up until he got paid in full. But just as soon as he decided on this plan of action, it occurred to him that there was no way he could turn the 250 books into money. All he could think of was a remark his aunt had once made to him, "Oh, you're so much like your mother." She had meant *nazig,* delicate, even whiny, and—in a man's case—lacking initiative, lazy. She might just as well have come right out and accused Varouj of being a burden on his father—unlike her own son who was so adept at business. All the relatives, even Varouj's father, constantly remarked on what a go-getter Garo was!

Varouj felt himself getting more and more excited,

and he resolved to handle this matter calmly. But how could he be calm, he thought. All that money spent on paper and plates. Even the labor costs had gone over a thousand dollars, not counting the long hours he had spent collating, arranging, and supervising the work. He noticed that all the time he had been talking the woman's expression had not changed. She still looked serene and kind. Varouj decided that she didn't have anything to do with money.

Quietly she said, "When he comes back, I'll tell him that you want to get paid."

At home that night, Varouj acted happy, but his wife insisted that something was wrong. Guessing that his mood had to do with business, she cheerfully declared that it must be a temporary setback, nothing of consequence. It was this naivete, perhaps a result of the protection her parents had given their only child, that had originally attracted him to her. Their families had been acquainted for years, but he had never looked upon her as the object of his romantic fantasies. When, on the spur of the moment, he had approached her with a plan for marriage, she had said it was a good idea and then had gone back to discussing the party they were to attend.

On nights like this, she tried to cheer him up by making love to him. Every time he succumbed reluctantly—he didn't want her to feel rejected—he felt that he shouldn't because giving in to her charms showed that he wasn't really worried. While they were making love, Varouj imagined that it was the blonde woman he held in his arms; and he tried to overcome his revulsion at her thick legs.

The next day, he made several phone calls to Atkins' office, and each time he was told that Atkins was out. Toward evening, when Varouj finally identified himself as the man who had printed Atkins' book, the woman said her boss hadn't been in all day. The following day a man answered the phone and said Atkins was out of the country. Varouj didn't believe him and called several times more, each time imitating other accents and pretending to be different people. The first few times he asked for "Dr. Atkins," then for "Mr. Atkins." Finally, he asked to speak to "John." Each time he received the same answer.

On Monday morning, he had a phone call from the woman. She said, "Dr. Atkins requests the pleasure of your company at an office party he is giving tonight at six-thirty." Varouj didn't know what this invitation meant, but he accepted, trying to think of how he was going to bring up the subject of the bill. He was not going to be put off by the fear of being labeled "afraid for his money." Once a boy had asked to look at Varouj's freshly-minted coins and then refused to return them. Varouj had begun to cry and had turned helplessly to go home. Before a group of their friends, the boy had thrown the coins at Varouj, saying, "You don't have one drop of *ghabadayoutioun*"—a spontaneous generosity which affirmed one's manhood and self-respect.

Going up in the elevator, Varouj tried to wear an expression which would tell whomever he had to deal with that he was determined to get his money. Head erect, he tried to look cocky as he opened the door.

On a collapsible card table in Atkins' suite sat one-half gallon bottles of vodka, gin, bourbon, and Scotch, arranged in a straight line. Opposite them was a line of mixers. At the far end of the table stood a pyramid of plastic cups and a paper bucket of fresh ice. The woman, who stood beside the table, was wearing a long bright-colored dress and more make-up than on the day Varouj had seen her for the first time. She stood passively and didn't seem one bit worried that she had nothing to do. Her formal attire, her make-up, and her neatly done hair made Varouj feel cheap. He was wearing the slacks and dark blue sweater that were his work outfit, and he had deliberately not washed the spots of ink off his hands. A man standing in the doorway of Atkins' office came up to Varouj and gave him a warm handshake, introduced himself as John Carpenter, and asked if he had met Ava. Gently holding Varouj by the elbow, he led him the few steps that brought them close to the woman.

"Ava, this is . . . I'm sorry, how do you pronounce your name?"

"Va-rouge."

"That's not as difficult as I thought."

Varouj extended his hand, and there was a brief pause before the woman took it. He pressed her hand very firmly, but it remained limp.

"Would you like a drink?" she asked.

"Please," said Varouj, gently tilting his head forward. When she didn't move, he hastily added, "Gin and tonic."

"Ava, honey, where's the first edition of my commodities book?" Atkins interrupted, coming out of his office. Noticing Varouj, he said, "Mr. Printer, I am glad you could come. I sent over the books, and you did a fine job." He grabbed Varouj's hand and then followed the woman, who had gone into his office. Varouj picked up the glass she had left half-filled, added more gin, and filled the empty space with tonic water.

"Things are going pretty well," the man who had welcomed Varouj said. "We got a very interesting



machine today. Come, let me show it to you. It's in Dr. Atkins' office."

A narrow strip of paper was emerging from the machine. "It gives us instant information," Carpenter explained. Varouj looked around the office. On the walls, behind the machine, were two clusters of plaques and degrees and on either side of them a painting. One was a lake by moonlight with a mountain in the background; the other, a bouquet of red roses. Behind Atkins' wide desk, which was covered with a lot of glittering objects, hung a large portrait of the woman. It was full-length, in pastels, and looked like Ava without her faint smile.

Atkins was talking intently to two men in their thirties who wore suits of synthetic fabric and dark-colored shirts. Ava was behind the desk, under her picture, arranging the contents of a drawer. When she saw Carpenter and Varouj, she came over and said, "I'm sorry I didn't finish making your drink."

"Oh, that is o.k." Varouj wished he could add in good English that she didn't need to worry about getting things for him.

"Ava, where are the poems I wrote for you? Get them, will you?" Atkins said.

The woman left the office, and Atkins—this time addressing all four men—said: "You see, gentlemen, I am a romantic at heart. I am a firm believer in the proposition that business is not all. As a matter of fact, a good businessman is the man who knows when to stop thinking business and begins doing something else just as zealously as he conducts his business. I, gentlemen, write poetry after work, just as systematically as I do everything else." He turned aside to address the woman, who had come back into the room. "There you are, honey." Then he continued, "This whole book of poetry," he said, holding up a thin, hand-bound volume with a postcard-size picture of red roses on its cover, "I wrote in one night."

"Amazing," said one of the men.

Atkins passed the book to Varouj, who glanced through it. Entitled *Roses for Ava*, it contained poems in which Ava was likened to a rose in the moonlight, on the shores of a lake, in the mountains, in fields. Some poems rhymed; some didn't. Some were short; some went on for pages. Varouj imagined Atkins on the night that he wrote the poems. Wearing a silk robe of navy blue with a burgundy foulard, he would have been standing before a picture window in a high-rise apartment, gazing at the lights of the city. He had probably just finished making love to Ava, who was lying in bed with her quiet smile.

"What do you think of them?" Atkins asked Varouj.

"It is good," Varouj said.

"Honey, bring me another copy of the book. I'd like to give one to this gentleman."

When Ava came back, Atkins asked for the pen on his desk so that he could autograph the book. Varouj noticed that the pen was not an arm's length from where he was standing and that the woman had to go around the group to get it. Without showing any trace of irritation, she gave Atkins the pen.

"How about serving these gentlemen another drink?" Atkins said, as he scribbled in the book.

Varouj's eyes caught the woman's. He tried to smile.

"Here," Atkins said, handing the book to Varouj. Turning to the woman, Atkins went on, "These people are thirsty."

Varouj walked out after the woman, poured himself a drink of Scotch, and without saying anything returned to Atkins' office. He was beginning to feel the effects of the mixed alcohol on his empty stomach, and he began to regret having taken the drink; but every time Atkins turned toward him, Varouj took another sip.

After Ava had served the others, Atkins ordered her to find the statuette he'd brought back from Africa. Varouj, deciding he had to say something, planned carefully, in order to make sure he knew all the English words and that he had them in the right order. "Mr. Atkins," he began, "the roses are very delicate. Too much wind, one time from one direction, one time another, in the end brings the rose down." Varouj stopped, deciding to leave out the part about the thorns.

"This is not for a rose," he concluded.

There was silence for a brief moment. Then Atkins, with his usual zest, turned to Ava, "Give our friend another drink."

Blushing, Varouj followed the woman into the other room and stood beside her while she poured. Handing it to him, she smiled. He said, "Why he's so impolite?" He had wanted to say *insensitive* but couldn't think of the word. The woman leaned forward and kissed him lightly on the lips. "You're too sensitive. I'll be all right," she said and went back into the next room. Varouj stood still for a few moments. Then he left.

On the way home, he had to pull the car to the side of the road and vomit in the gutter. As he drove on, he kept telling himself that he was a fool. Yes, he had completely forgotten the purpose of going to the party. He had intended to confront Atkins before the others in order to embarrass him into paying.

Two days after the party, Varouj received a one-thousand-dollar check signed by Atkins. After depositing it in the bank, he called to find out why the entire sum had not been paid.

"Why, here I am doing you a favor and you're complaining," Atkins said. "Ordinarily, I never pay any bill before the customary thirty days."

"What thirty days?" Varouj yelled into the phone. "This is c.o.d."

"Look, let's not argue over this, okay?" Atkins responded. "You should have indicated that to me when I brought you the job, not after you did it," he said firmly.

Varouj broke the news of his "stupidity" to his wife that night, but as usual she responded by trying to make love to him.

A week later, as soon she got home, she jubilantly told him that she had found the solution to his problem with Atkins. The woman next door had suggested that Varouj notify the District Attorney's office.

"It's not any good," Varouj explained in Armenian. "I called today and found out that Atkins is gone. There is no trace of him. The telephone is disconnected. I went there, but nobody could tell me where he is. But after I calculated the cost of the paper and the labor, less the thousand dollars, the loss isn't great." After a pause, he added, "I have to learn to be careful."

Toward morning, Varouj's wife woke him. "Who is Ava?" she asked.

"That man's secretary," Varouj said, without telling her about his dream, in which he saw himself naked, running up and down Telegraph Avenue, unable to find his own shop. Every time he approached someone to ask the way to Quick Print and Copy, he found that he couldn't speak and he ran away in shame. Finally he found himself in a courtroom where several policemen stood guard in the aisles. A man in a dark suit, holding an attache case, kept wagging his finger at Varouj, who tried in vain to say that it wasn't his fault, that he had told Atkins about getting paid, that he had even thought of asking for a deposit and not handing over the completed job until he got his money. Suddenly, behind the man in the dark suit, Atkins and Ava appeared. Atkins called Varouj a cheat, while Ava, smiling faintly, began to take off her clothes. Varouj observed, without surprise, that her legs were nicely proportioned. Only when Atkins accused him of having raped her did Varouj regain his voice. "Ava, Ava," he shouted. That's when his wife woke him up.

For a few days, Varouj toyed with the idea of calling the District Attorney's office, but finally he just threw out everything connected with the Atkins job: invoice, work order, sample book, instructions. Just as he finished, he noticed a small envelope on top of the day's mail. It was postmarked "Reno, Nevada." The address was handwritten; the stamp, of an old and discontinued type. The envelope was addressed to "Mr. Varouj, Owner." Opening the envelope, he found a check for $3953.64, and a note, which read, "Sorry for the delay. Regards, Ava."

That afternoon, two well-dressed men showed up at the shop. Displaying their FBI identification cards, they asked politely if Varouj knew anyone by the name of John Atkins.

"We printed a book for him," Varouj said, trying to conceal his nervousness.

"Did he pay for it?" one of the men asked.

"Yes. Sure. Why?"

"We've had complaints about him. He's wanted for questioning in Texas and Arizona."

"Oh."

"Do you have any of the books you printed for him?"

"I am sorry, sir, but no," Varouj replied.

Leaving a card on which were printed only a name and a phone number, one of the men asked Varouj to call him if he should remember anything about Atkins or if he ever heard from him again.

After the men left, Varouj went into his office and shut the door. Taking out the gold monogrammed cigarette lighter his aunt had given him on his wedding day, he carefully tore up the envelope from Reno and burnt it in his ashtray. Then he called his wife to tell her that since it was such a nice day he wanted to take the family to the zoo. Then I'll take them out to dinner, he thought, and tell her about the check. "A man needs a break once in a while," he said.

The Secret of the Colophons

By Leonardo Alishan

Before reading Michael Arlen's *Passage to Ararat,* I didn't know whether a colophon was a fatal disease or a kind of shiny paper for wrapping presents. As a matter of fact, even after reading Arlen, I still had to consult the dictionary, where I was informed that it is "an inscription usually placed at the end of a book or manuscript and usually containing facts relative to its production. . ." This double "usually" somewhat bothered me, but the few colophons that Arlen mentions had fascinated me so much that I did not bother with definitions anymore. I felt there was a spirit there—somewhere!

The book that Arlen had quoted from was *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts 1301-1480,* selected, translated, and annotated by Avedis Sanjian and published by Harvard University Press in 1969, with the subtitle of *A Source for Middle Eastern History.* I searched for the book in the University of Texas library to no avail. I asked the fourteen other Armenians who live in Austin if they had heard of the book or happened to own a copy of it. No one had and no one did. Finally, I quoted two of the colophons mentioned in *Passage to Ararat* as fragments of a literary collage in an epic poem of mine, and thus, temporarily exorcised the book from my system.

A couple of years went by. I was studying modern English poetry, modern Persian fiction, ancient Armenian history, ancient Persian religions, and, among other things, theories concerning the emergence of literary genres. Armenian friends and I were scattered

among tall, blond Texans who were seldom sober and often suspicious of all foreigners. Order, as we knew it from back home, was not to be found in America. And survival was hard. Fortunately, soon after I was hired by the University of Utah to teach Persian literature. There, one day, while I was going through some books for a project in the Middle Eastern section of the University library, I found a copy of Professor Sanjian's book! My heartbeat grew quicker, and I knew, I knew, I knew that once more I was to be distracted from my main course of studies by the will of my fathers who had summoned me, and whom, like most of my follow Armenians, I simply could not disobey.

I read the book in one sitting. I felt there was something very wrong with the subtitle. I had experienced the presence of powerful spirits in most of these colophons, yet they had been called "A Source for Middle Eastern History"! Something was definitely wrong. I read Professor Sanjian's introduction again and again. I liked the last paragraph of the introductory essay very much:

> *. . .since the texts that follow are merely historical excerpts, they do not give a complete picture of all the characteristic features of the colophons. Nevertheless, the foregoing discussions and the texts herewith published are sufficient to underscore the unique literary art developed by the Armenian scribes, the unsung heroes of Armenian literature.*

If Professor Sanjian knew that these manuscripts were received "as a child in Zion and as an intimate friend of Jerusalem," if he knew that "captured manuscripts were never referred to as booty, but rather, like human beings, they were either 'carried off into captivity,' or they were 'rescued or purchased from captivity,' " then why had he dissected the children of these "unsung heroes of Armenian literature" and preserved only certain parts of their bodies, "the history"? Why? Because he is probably a historian, you idiot, I said to myself. That's why. At least the man has felt that these colophons are works of art (and Professor Sanjian does refer to the colophon as a "literary genre" in his introduction to *A Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts in the United States* [1976] and has spent so much time translating them). But how do *I* know that they're art? Is there a spirit there, or is it my spirit reflecting itself?

I read *Passage to Ararat* again. At first, Arlen had found these colophons "difficult to read, for there seemed to be no 'story' to them, no order, no purpose." But he had kept on reading and had soon realized that he was "strongly affected." And he had begun to "hear something in these colophons. . ." Finally, "what had at first seemed like dry words on a page," had begun "to come through" to him "as voices. . . unheard voices." I was sure that Arlen had seen the spirit, too, though he had left it at that. I wanted to pursue this matter to its very end. I craved to know how this spirit had been born and what was unique about the form in which it had manifested itself after birth. Both Professor Sanjian and Arlen had felt its presence, but neither had answered the questions which interested me. I checked V. Nersessian's *An Index of Articles on Armenian Studies in Western Journals* (1975) and Anne M. Avakian's *Armenia and the Armenians in Academic Dissertations* (1974) and failed to find anything more on this subject. So I decided to reread Professor Sanjian.

I took notes on the characteristics of my favorite colophons from *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts 1301-1480,* and compared these notes with Professor Sanjian's own typical examples, offered in his introduction to the above-mentioned book. At least I was now sure that the colophons were a distinct genre.

The first and the second section could be easily formed into one unit. After all, aside from a praise of the sponsor (which was practical and had to be done in order for the scribe to get some bread on his table) the first two sections concerned themselves with the glory of God and His Word. Professor Sanjian had written: "These theological sections are so standardized that they are of little value, even from the standpoint of tracing the historical development of the Armenian theological and Christological position." But Professor Sanjian was a historian in search of *facts,* whereas I was trying to view the colophons as works of art and was in search of truths. Since I had decided that the colophon was a genre, I could not agree with Professor Sanjian that because of its repetitious and standardized nature, the theological section of the colophon was of "little value." After all, I thought, it would be like saying once you've seen a Kashan carpet, you've seen them all. And that certainly was not true.

The more I read the colophons, the more certain I became that the scribe's sinful life and unworthy existence slipped, quite comfortably, from the second to the third section. The scribe attributed the misery of his life to his own and to his people's sins. Thus, in the middle section history was presented, in all its savagery and hellish nature, along with the scribe's and/or his people's sins.

The third and last section contained the scribe's request that his present and future generation of readers remember him and his loved ones in their prayers and to ask God's forgiveness for them. In some of the colophons, this section also contained the scribe's desperate

dependence on God as the only means of his immediate survival. Statements such as: "[our] salvation depended on the will of the Lord. . ." or "God is [our] only hope . . ." or ". . . but He, who delivered mankind from the servitude of Satan, will deliver [us]. . ." are not uncommon in these colophons.

"So you have narrowed it down to three sections," I said to myself, "and though there still is no flesh, now there are even fewer bones!" Then, while I was reading the colophons for the hundredth time, this question arose: Amid all this murder, anarchy, and misery, how could these scribes sit down and copy manuscripts? Were they crazy or something? And the answer to that question became the story of my odyssey.

First I searched for their motives for copying these holy manuscripts. Professor Sanjian says: "the sponsor and the scribe viewed the manuscript as a sacred and venerable object, and therefore explained the act of its production as a morally rewarding endeavor." And "the basic motivation common to all who were instrumental in the production of the manuscripts. . .was the perpetuation of their memory." Statements such as "My hand shall turn into dust, but this book shall remain as a memorial to me" or "Remember me when you read this manuscript" were common to many of the colophons. And as Professor Sanjian says:

> *It was the fervent hope of every scribe that he would be remembered by future generations for his labors. He always beseeched the readers to pray for the forgiveness of his manifold sins so that he might inherit the kingdom of God.*

But was this sufficient reason, I asked myself, for the scribe to carry his ink, pen, and paper from one ruined city to another, from one devastated region to another, witnessing his mother's amputated corpse and the death of thousands of people after an earthquake? No! It couldn't be. Although attaining eternal life after death was very important indeed, the scribe had to have a more immediate, a more desperate, a more human motivation to begin with. So I put the question of the scribe's motivation(s) temporarily aside, and went even further back. I wanted to begin from the very beginning. Thus, the question became, what kind of a world was the scribe born into? What did he see in that world, scattered all around him? Naturally, I went back once again to the book!

The more I looked for a colophon which had some good news, or at least the news of no news, the less I found. The colophons were unanimously burdened with tragedy. If the tragedy had not been caused by marauding tribes and savage armies, nature had stepped in with locusts or the plague or an earthquake. The scribe had seen invasions and had recorded the horrors of those invasions. Here is an example from one of the colophons concerning Timur Lang's conquest:

> *In the month of Mehekan the impending death knell was broadcast throughout Armenia. It was a sight to behold the terror caused upon sighting these awesome and beastly men, for those who heard their arrival were struck with consternation; and those who chanced to see them from afar were amazed by the uncustomary sight, because the dust caused by the hooves of their fiery and fast-running horses was like a dark cloud. If anyone took refuge on the peaks of high mountains and looked down upon the many legions which were amassed like a turbulent sea, the soul in his body trembled. And although he was alive, yet he felt weaker than the one who had been dead for many days, when he beheld the glittering of the swords, the swinging of the bombs [?], the stamping of the hooves of the horses, the clatter of the chariots, the neighing of the proud horses, the shrill of the sounds, [and] the sight of the immense horsemen, who crawled, crept, swarmed the fields, encircled the mountains, fixed their arrows, fenced in the broad expanses, uttered noises that were heard far and wide. And stretching for a distance of eight days, they filled the country with star-studded and red-painted tents, and carefully spun their ropes and masts. And if anyone in impregnable fortresses resisted them, they forthwith came upon them like a multitude of locusts; they surrounded them and squalled, bellowed, howled, lowed, barked, groaned, neighed, [and] roared. They* damdam *the* dhawls, *they thumped the* natarays, *they drew the* c'arxs, *they showered arrows///; they whirled the catapults, they flung the* blgihons*///; they destroyed, they demolished, they dug ditches, they trampled, they hammered, and in a single day they wiped out completely that which had been built in thousands of years.*
>
> *[Colophons,* p. 107]

And Timur is as bloody under any other name. Whether the invader is called Djihānshāh, Kara Yúsuf or Uzun Hasan, makes no difference. The blood that's spilled, is spilled, and it is Armenian blood:

> *. . .the wicked Djhānishāh attacked the country, and carried off numerous captives and slaughtered many. And . . . they cut off my mother's two hands, and they cast her head in the blood, and I buried her severed body in a grave on the day of the feast of Surp Georg [St. George]. . .*
>
> *[Colophons,* p. 264*]*

. . .in this year [A.D. 1476], there arrived the blood-thirsty beklarbek *[and] lord of the* t'axt', *the human-forced wild beast, the barbarous and brutal Hasan [Uzun Hasan]. . . .And they carried off 36,000 into captivity, excepting those whom they massacred and slew with the sword.*

[Colophons, p. 314*]*

And more and more and more! And as if the "human-forced wild beast(s)" were not enough, often nature joined in this bloody orgy also:

. . .and during the princedom of the brave Armenian generals and the devout and pious prince of princes Beśk'en and Iwaně, who succeeded the pious, devout and kinglike Baron Biwrdel and Vaxax, who died in Christ. Following their deaths, there occurred a severe famine and one-third of the inhabitants of Armenia fell victim to it; and after the famine was lifted, God's wrath again fell upon us, and there occurred a plague in all the land which took away half of the people;. . .

[Colophons, p. 87*]*

When there is no talk of invasions (which isn't often), there are instead reports of "the frequent epidemics and plagues, the famines and the devastation caused by locusts, earthquakes, and other natural calamities. . ." Why? Why? Why? I asked myself. Why did all these tragedies exercise their power on my people, this small, struggling people? I thanked God for not having been born in those times. And then it occurred to me: Had not the scribes asked the same question? And how was it that *they* had not gone mad? Unless they had found an answer to that "why," they could not have preserved their sanity. They would not have survived. And there lay the "motive" of the scribe, the unsung hero of Armenian literature, for copying those huge, holy manuscripts and authoring those small and deceptively simple colophons.

For a while it seemed that the scribes had, indeed, come very close to insanity. For example, the scribe Karapet, who had witnessed the attack of the Timurid tribe, wrote:

And when they tyrannized and then occupied any fortress/// they uttered a loud roar. And those who were in the montains came down and assembled before the cities and fortresses. They instantly assaulted and demolished the iron gates, and they scaled them from all sides, and they engulfed them like the foaming billows of the sea. Woe unto those times! The corpses of some floated in a sea of blood; some,



whose heads were half cut off from their bodies, pleaded for water and soon died of thirst; [and] fountains of blood gushed out of the mouths of those whose heads were dangling. Oh, the cries! Oh, the laments! Oh, the tearful and heartrending anguish! They piled up the corpses in clusters, and kicked them around! There were woeful cries hither and thither! Now the sea of the horsemen calmed down; now, they went about in search of the Christians, and when they found them they mercilessly slaughtered them/// they numbered in thousands. They put the wondrous bishops to the sword; they ground the heads of the pious priests between stones; they cast the flock of Christ as food for the dogs; they trampled the children with their horses; they debauched the women, and carried off their infants into captivity. Like the threshing-floor of flails, they thrashed the children with their horses; and, in place of grain, rivers of blood began to spring forth, and in place of straw the bones flowed forth like dust. The beasts were satiated; the birds grew weary of eating; the wolves wondered whose flesh they should eat—the flesh of the patriarchs, the priests, the deacons, the servants of the church, the anchorites, or the hermits? Moreover, they attacked the churches; they demolished the altars; they set their gates on fire; they desecrated the temples; they smashed the incense boxes and chalices; they forced them to renounce their faith and then slaughtered them. They



made them starve, so much so that they began to feed on dogs, cats, donkeys, horses, corpses, and murtar; *and they even roasted their tenderly nursed infants, and then ate them up. There was neither bread nor water.*

[Colophons, p. 108*]*

And he had given the following account of the survivors:

It was a sight to behold the weeping of the parents, the misery of the children, the contraction of the intestines, the disfigurement of the countenances, the yellowing of the faces, the fading away of the voices, the prostration of the feet, the inaction of the hands, the dumbness of the tongues, and the paralysis of the brains.

[Colophons, p. 108*]*

So there were men and there were women who had lost their sanity. There were those who could no longer talk, for fear of remembering. And another scribe, Nersēs, wrote in a corner of the *Ritual Book* he had copied:

. . .I plead with you not to blame me for my errors. . . for we witnessed the corpses of numerous men who died before our eyes, and I was distraught like a wild beast and could barely maintain my wits for fear of death, otherwise, I could have completed the copying of this [manuscript] sooner; moreover, we too were afflicted by the plague. . . .

[Colophons, p. 867*]*

These poor scribes had indeed been on the verge of losing their wits. They had witnessed murder and chaos, and not in the forms of humans only. Nature herself had helped the disorder to come about. The earthquakes, plagues, and locusts had helped to make nature look ever more unnatural and anarchic. And not only the earth, but also the sky had reflected this disorder:

In the year 824 of the Great Armenian Era [A.D. 1375], in bitter and grievous times, in the year when the city of Sis was captured. And I, the humble and false Bishop Zak'arē, chanced to be there. Who can recount in writing the tragedy which my eyes witnessed, for I saw the bright sun, the stars, and the moon fall down.

[Colophons, p. 99*]*

But no matter how close they had approached insanity, they had remained sane and had survived. How? How had they accomplished this miracle?

By now it had become very clear to me that the colophons were works of art indeed. The scribes had not reported history, as history. They had reported the impact

of history on their senses. And they had attempted to create some order out of the visible, and horribly visual, disorder of history. In short, the fact that history had survived in the colophons seemed incidental to me. I felt that the scribe hadn't really cared how history would survive him. He was no historian. His main concern was how *he* was going to survive history. . . . But the scribe was not another Dante Alighieri. He was a man with a "limited education," who often "tried to emulate the language and the style of the classical period of Armenian literature," and often failed. He stood somewhere between the makers of "great Art" and simple storytellers. It probably never occurred to him that someday he would be considered as an artist. Yet, he had accepted under the ever-powerful will of self-preservation and survival, the task of a great thinker and creator. He had asked "why" a thousand times in his desperate attempts to see some form of order, some kind of meaning in all that barbaric and meaningless disorder. And he had found the answer in the energetic, living Christianity of his times.

The closest that any of the people I had read on the colophons had come to my realization, was Professor Sanjian in the following paragraph:

> *And, in consonance with the prevailing religious and moral concepts, the scribes, not unlike the historians, ascribed almost every calamity—invasions, plunders, captivity, and natural disaster—to the wrath of God as a punishment for the manifold sins of man, and to the wicked machinations of Satan. This, as well as the milieu in which the scribes lived, explains to a large extent the overabundance of biblical quotations, references, or parallelisms in the colophons. Such references were also employed by the authors of the colophons as a stylistic device to underscore the intensity of calamities.*
>
> *[Colophons,* p. XII*]*

Though Professor Sanjian says that the scribes "ascribed" the disasters "to the wrath of God as a punishment for the manifold sins of man," he had also suggested that the scribes employed religious elements as "a stylistic device to underscore the intensity of calamities." I suggest that the concept of sin functions at a much more vital and deeper level than Professor Sanjian has noted. And I also suggest that the religious elements are much more than stylistic devices, that they are the very elements by which the scribe recreates the concept of the orderly world.

Professor Sanjian's argument begins with the statement that the scribes, "in consonance with the prevailing religious and moral concepts," ascribed the disasters to the wrath of God. I suggest that this ascription was primarily an answer to the torturing question of *"Why?"* As Yovannēs wrote in his reproduction of the *Gospel:*

> *Why did all this befall them?*
> *Because of the sins they committed.*
>
> *[Colophons,* p. 71*]*

When T'umay Minasenc' asked, "Why was. . .Armenia. . .subjected to devastation and plunder?" the answer he gave was, "on account of my multitudinous sins. . . ." When Karapet asked himself, "Why did the Christians suffer so?" he answered, "By God's consent . . .on account of our manifold sins." Almost every single colophon had this concept of sin echoing in it. These men were going mad and they had to understand, to make sense of all the ongoing madness which we now call history and which *they* must have thought of as life, lest they did go mad. Thus, sin became the source of order. Sin became the missing element which the puzzle needed in order to make sense. It was still a very horrible and terrifying puzzle, but it made sense! There was order. There was *a reason* for all this. *Sin!* My *sin,* your *sin,* our *sin! Sin* was the cause of all this. This was no evil accident. This was just punishment. The world was not a godless, savage jungle. It did have a God and it did have meaning and order. After all, is not one of the world's greatest literary masterpieces, *The Inferno,* based on the idea of sin and of order which depended on sin? Thus, these scribes also had relied on sin to create order in their country, their earthly inferno.

On the nature of Philo's theological thoughts, Jean Laporte writes that Philo believes "Through repentance —through our fight against and victory over the passions—with the power of reason and the help of the grace of God, we restore the order disturbed by sin."* But as I have suggested, it is *through* "sin" that the scribe restores the order which history or nature had disturbed. And it is after the ordering of the world (which takes place with the ascription of the disaster to sin, in the second section of the colophon), that the scribe moves on to Philo's level of things, and in the third and last section of his colophon, asks the reader to pray for his soul. For it is this prayer, added to his other acts of repentence, including the copying of a holy manuscript under impossible circumstances, that will create that final and universal order, by which the scribe will live eternally in eternal peace.

Thus, I suggest, it is after accepting the scribe's

*In *Perspectives on Charismatic Renewal.* Edward O'Connor, editor (University of Notre Dame Press. 1975), p. 67.

desperation in making use of sin as a source for order, that we can say the scribe, "not unlike the historians," and "in consonance with the prevailing religious and moral concepts" ascribes "almost every calamity. . .to the wrath of God. . . ." In short, it is the concept of sin as an order-generating energy which causes the intelligentsia of that time, on all its different levels, to "employ" the concept of sin in all their works. In that age, Christianity seems to be the only thing that really matters, and the only source through which some sense of order might be extracted. And almost everything written in those days seems to reflect a world which is utterly black, bloody, and hopelessly chaotic—were it not for the Christian concept of sin which always enters and always succeeds in ordering things according to a divinely conceived, heavenly design.

"I felt that the scribe hadn't really cared how history would survive him. He was no historian. His main concern was how he was going to survive history. . . ."

But if, as I have argued, man's sin and God's wrath appears behind the structures of thought of all the intelligentsia, then what is it that makes the scribe unique and the colophon a unique literary genre?

In the beginning, there was history. And the scribe was living in history and experiencing it with all his senses. Then history's horror grew so intense that the scribe's sanity could barely keep its balance on that tightrope. The scribe went beyond his senses. He went to all that which formed his intellect and knowledge. He went to Christianity and his Christian education. He ordered the physical and anarchic history with spiritual and orderly Christianity. The process of this ordering created a genre, the colophon.

History and that which gives meaning to history, i.e., sin, constitute the second section of the colophon. What precedes and follows this section is what makes the colophon a unique form of art.

In the first section, the *P'ark'* is a celebration of the Trinity, that which existed before everything else. This section is the starting point of the linear, Christian concept of time, i.e., of history. It is the point where Christ is with the Father, and Man is in Eden. Then comes the second section: Christ arrives to live in the body of Jesus. It is the period of God's suffering, which begins with His birth and ends with His crucifixion. It is the Age of "History," i.e., of life on earth. It is a transient and anarchic period when Man is cast out of Eden and into this world, a world which, for the scribe, seems to be constituted of uninterrupted horror and perpetual crucifixion. But, after all, why was Man cast out of Eden and into his death-oriented life? Because of Sin. Thus, Sin becomes the scribe's "Christian" explanation of the horror, of the history he suffers. But crucifixion is followed by resurrection. Christ returns to the Father. Resurrection is one of the simplest "problems" for the early Church Fathers: ". . . just as God created man in the beginning out of the dust, He can create him anew after the body has returned to the dust."

Thus, "Through repentance," and "with the power of reason and the help of the grace of God," Man can return to the beginning and to Eden, when there was the harmony of unity with God and where there was an eternal, orderly life. So the scribe repents and attempts to regain the grace of God. He sits under the dim light, amid massacres and plagues, and reproduces the word of God. He copies the manuscript so that, in the words of Simeon Vardapet; ". . . I may be remembered after my death before the immortal King and so that it may intercede with God [in my behalf]. . . . " Therefore, even if the scribe does not ask the reader in the third section to pray for his soul and to beg God's forgiveness for him and his family, still the very placing of the colophon on the background of a religious manuscript, or an overabundant inclusion of "biblical quotations, references, or parallelisms in the colophons. . . " would be sufficient to create that sense of order which I have discussed above.

Thus, the humble colophon, with its three-phase cycle, becomes a miniature work of art. The colophon becomes the final manifestation of a simple, suffering, Christian Armenian's attempt to order the world, the chaos of history. In the spirit of naivete, it presents a microcosmic human view of the macrocosmic, divine design which reigns over the earth and the heavens. The colophon succeeds because of its very "artlessness." It is so innocent in its desperation that the reader lets go of his defenses and is conquered by the spirit of the colophon. The "unheard voices" which Arlen had heard, echo in the reader until he finally receives the message. And what is the message? What is the final purpose of the scribe's attempts at ordering the world and preserving his sanity? What does he hope for through his trust and faith in God? Does he give up this world for the

other? Writing in 1386, Grigor Cerenc' Xlat'ec'i gives us a succinct answer:

When I wrote this lamentation. . .
We were afflicted with anguish
Which befell our land
And our nation, in particular,
Our suffering Armenian race. . .
Our churches are in darkness,
Our nation dispersed everywhere.
Yet we thank the benevolent [God],
For we survived *this grief,*
For He left us not in anguish,
But soon brought comfort to us. . . (emphasis added)
[Colophons, p. 161]

Survival is the final purpose! It seems that for the Armenian people it has always been the major problem. And it seems that Christianity has always managed to keep them going, to keep their faith in God and through God, in Life. And the colophon is perhaps the smallest and the most powerful Armenian genre which is built upon and which manifests this Christian energy. . . .

I have finally passed on what I had received from Professor Sanjian's magnificent book on that gloomy afternoon in the University library. The spirits of my fathers will now allow me to return to the project which had sent me to the library in the first place.

I am glad that while writing this essay I was not surrounded with death, that I had no trouble finding "additional writing paper," that the locusts did not arrive, that I was not forced to "write with one eye," or with a hand bleeding from the cut of a sickle, that the flies did not "suck the ink of my script," that "the fleas in my cell" did not cause me "intense annoyance," and I am especially glad that while I "was writing, a mouse" did not "urinate on the margin of the manuscript. . . !" *[Colophons]* I am glad that in the year 1429 of the Great Armenian Era, I have been able to sit in my peaceful office, in Salt Lake City, and write of my fathers to my sons.



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The National "Turkey Hen"

By Gostan Zarian

Translator's note: In 1914, Gostan Zarian was in Istanbul editing with Daniel Varoujan, Hagop Oshagan, and Kegham Parseghian, the literary periodical Mehian. *Shortly before the deportations and massacres began, however, he managed to escape to Bulgaria, where he was followed by Zabel Yessayan. In the following extract from his autobiographical book* Cities, *Zarian writes of Zabel Yessayan's futile plans to save the deported Armenian intellectuals, most of whom were by then, very probably, murdered by the Turks.*

Cities *was originally published serially in* Hairenik Monthly *of Boston (from June to November 1930), and later included in a volume titled* Works (Yerger), *edited by Boghos Snabian and published by the Kevork Milidinetsi Literary Committee (Antelias, 1975), which also contains two other autobiographical books by Zarian:* The Traveller and His Road *and* West, *both of which were likewise originally published in* Hairenik.

Terrible things are happening in Istanbul.

The Turkish government has tied a lasso around the Armenians and is now jailing and deporting them. The frontiers are locked with ten keys. Letters remain unanswered.

In the streets people shake hands in melancholy silence. There is a sobbing prayer in each Armenian heart. Once in a while they utter words of revenge and lower their

heads in despair. What's going to happen next? No one knows.

They say our intellectuals have all been jailed; they say they have been deported somewhere in the general direction of Cilicia; they say many of them could not endure the ordeal; they say. . .

Contradictory rumors, like frenzied black flies, swarm around open wounds.

And inevitably there are those who take refuge in dreams. They devise plans and think up ways of deliverance. At secret meetings, political parties make top secret decisions the details of which are known to every child in the street. Military attachés at embassies are given no rest: one delegation after another, one plan after another, one proposal after another.

"We can't just sit there with arms folded! We must do something. Work, work. . .!"

Wherepon imaginary armies invade Asia Minor. Fifty thousand Armenian soldiers wearing the latest British uniforms and with the full support of an enormous fleet, land on the beaches and ascend the Taurus Mountain, on whose summit they erect our national flag. In the grip of pincers formed by our forces and those of our allies, Turkish troops run towards the sea and plunge into the waters. Enver Pasha is taken prisoner. The problem we now face is how to dispose of Istanbul. . . .

Owners of coffee shops and shish-kebab joints strut and swagger in the street with fire in their eyes and battle in their hearts.

"Work, work!"

* * * * *

In those days of despair and irresponsible heroics, suddenly the word spread that she was among us, herself, the noted authoress.

She has arrived.

An outlandishly tall hat on her head, a tight-fitted dress, quaintly large feet, narrow eyes—a plucked old turkey hen who, after crossing the flatlands of Thrace and the closed frontiers, has fallen in the streets of Sofia and is now squawking with a shrill, ardent voice.

She speaks volubly, with the accents of the Scutari dialect, her tragic voice shaking, her thick fingers folding and unfolding, and the centuries-old sorrow of the Armenian nation perched on her weakened shoulders.

The lady thinks in all modesty that her sudden arrival in the Bulgarian capital is an event of national, perhaps even international, import. She is under the impression that her literary fame will perform miracles. It could even happen that irresolute Bulgaria may now decide on its future foreign policy. In any case it is necessary that



the local daily papers print verbatim her lacerating declarations and calls to arms.

And with her wobbly tall hat on top of her head, her

broken French and Oriental delivery, yellowed teeth and tortured lips, she runs from one editorial office to another, waiting endlessly before closed doors. Deeply distressed by the icy smiles and the not-so-polite refusals, her sincere patriotism and vanity are wounded and her mouth is twisted out of shape.

She decides therefore to be active among Armenians. Like a broken violin, her strident voice tries to play all the familiar tunes. Abdul-Hamid, the holocaust, the Cilician massacres (about which she collected data after traveling there in person), magnanimous France—in short, all the predictable clichés are worked over like chewing gum in her mouth and compell her audience to take out their handkerchiefs and wipe their wet faces.

With a grief-stricken, whimpering voice, she pays compliments to owners of coffee shops and shish-kebab joints; she whispers mysterious things in their ears and expresses concern about their dear wives and children.

She is invited to dinner.

* * * * *

But where is all this going to end? Will her stay produce nothing but a series of dinner invitations and lonely nights spent in small hotel rooms? Of course not!

"The noted authoress stands up, looks around with an apprehensive, harassed expression, approaches the window, opens the door for the second time and scans the corridor, after which she sits down, rearranges her abundant abdomen with both hands, and with eyes open wide stares at us."

And the lady decides to strike dramatic poses. New undertakings, new decisions, new programs.

"Work, work, work!"

The hem of her gown swishing, her hair piled on her forehead, she delivers speeches with tight, blackened lips, alludes to secret, critical decisions. First and foremost, caution and secrecy.

"May I confide in such and such a person about my plan? Can he be useful to us in any way? What is his financial status. . .?"

What is his financial status?

And like a pigeon in love, she drags her wings to the ground, she struts, revolves, coos.

"The lady wishes to see you at such and such a time. She is going to speak about vital national matters. At such and such an hour, sharp—urgent—don't forget. . .!"

We leave everything aside and on the appointed hour we enter the lady's chamber.

The bed is unmade; there are empty sardine cans on the table; and a toothbrush with most of its bristles missing, a coffee cup, a filthy towel. . . .

Sad smiles, melancholy exclamations, cheap literary sentences interspersed with French expressions, loud gasps and whispers.

"Shhh. . .! Caution. The hotel—strangers. . . ."

"Tell us then, what's all this about?"

"Shut the door first."

We shut the door.

The noted authoress stands up, looks around with an apprehensive, harassed expression, approaches the window, opens the door for the second time and scans the corridor, after which she sits down, rearranges her abundant abdomen with both hands, and with eyes open wide stares at us.

"Words are useless. We must act!" she says with a trembling voice.

"May I offer you a cigarette?"

"What kind is it?"

"Egyptian."

"I'll take one."

She does. Crosses her legs. Crosses her legs and sighs. She sighs and speaks about the spirit of sacrifice. Our revolutionary traditions, the example of Kristapor,[1] the Tashnagtsoutiun, the Tashnagtsoutiun, the Tashnagtsoutiun. . .!

"Let's get to the point."

"All right, I will."

She gets up once more, looks out the window, sits down, hoists abdomen.

"Here it is. When I left Istanbul, I heard they drove our friends to Cilicia. . . . Ah! the thought of it horrifies me. Imagine, all our beloved companions—Agnouni, Zohrab, Varoujan, Siamanto[2]. . .My hair stands on end . . .my heart. . ."

Tears.

"Yes. It's terrible. . . ."

We are all overcome with emotion.

"These Bulgarians are of no help. Such distasteful

people! I couldn't make them understand a thing. Yes, of course, they said; we are all aware of your fame as a writer, your talent. . . . They paid me a series of compliments, welcomed me with some degree of respect and love; yes, even love—I mean declarations of love; yes, yes, imagine, declarations of love. . . ."

She stretches her legs, bares teeth.

"Finally I reached the conclusion that we were on our own. We must take the necessary steps ourselves. . .we must act—"

"Yes, of course!"

And with a plaintive voice, she sets forth her plan. "First, we need financial assistance. Without money, alas, we can do nothing! Metaphysics and idealism are of no use at all. . . . But then, what is a little monetary sacrifice compared to our national woes? The sacred labor of our liberation, our readiness to die in order to save our brothers from the claws of the beastly Turk—"

"Have another cigarette."

"May I?"

"Please."

"Thank you."

Obviously the lady cannot reenter Turkey. Is there anyone who will not recognize her immediately? Her name, her fame! A long pause here. She has therefore come up with an alternative plan. She will travel to Cilicia disguised as a man.

Yes!

Once there, she will establish contact with our exiled intellectuals and organize them. In the meantime, French or English destroyers will be standing by off the Cilician shore. At night, signals could be exchanged by means of semaphores. She will carry with her a goodly sum of money with which to purchase weapons. Follow me? One day, at last, when everything is ready, they will assault the Turkish guards and make a run for the beach. The destroyers will open fire on the pursuing troops, send boats, and rescue those who reached the sea. It goes without saying that some will never make it. Perhaps she, too, will be among the slain. . . .

With a handkerchief, she touches her completely dry left eye.

No matter, she declares, once more adjusting her abdomen with a quick, deft motion, she will be more than happy to sacrifice her own life.

And naturally she is fully aware of all our objections. The English may refuse to send destroyers. In that case we must appeal to Lloyd George and Lord Grey, mentioning her name. If they continue to refuse, we must establish contact with the French, who will be more than willing to cooperate. Having spent many years in Paris, the lady is widely known in French upper circles. This thought animates her. Her patriotic ardor is rekindled, and her voice flutters like a victorious banner.

"Me, me, me, me. . .!"

Icy silence.

"What do you think?"

"Nothing is impossible. Now then, what can we do? How can we help?"

"Money and contact with the powers."

"The money part is easy. . . ."

"Get the money first then," she retorts with eyes shining, thick fingers scratching head, feet dragging restlessly on the floor. "We'll plan our next move after we overcome that hurdle."

We come out. It is a sunny day. The snow has begun to melt.

My companion takes off his hat, straightens his long hair with his hand, adjusts his glasses and looks at me with astonished eyes.

"Some kind of Isabella d'Este. . ."[3]

"What's that you said? Zabel?"

"I-sa-bel-la d'Este."

"Ha-ha-ha!"

And with wide open nostrils he inhales the spring air noisily.

(Translated by Ara Baliozian)

NOTES

[1]Kristapor Mikaelian (1859-1905): political activist and co-founder of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnagtsoutiun).

[2]Agnouni (Khachatur Malumian: 1863-1915): editor, author, political activist; Daniel Varoujan (Cheboukiarian: 1884-1915): leading poet. Siamanto (Adom Yarjanian: 1878-1915): major poet and political activist. Krikor Zohrab (1861-1915): novelist, short-story writer, diplomat. For more on these writers see *Ararat* Quarterly (Autumn 1976), a special issue devoted to the victims of the 1915 Genocide. See also my *The Armenians: Their History and Culture,* revised and expanded edition (New York, 1980).

[3]Isabella d'Este, marchioness of Mantua (1474-1539): celebrated Italian Renaissance princess knowledgable in the arts and highly skilled in politics.

Further Reading: Zabel Yessayan (1868-1943) is discussed at some length in *Ararat* Quarterly (Winter 1979), which also contains translations from her fiction and autobiographical writings. For more on Gostan Zarian, see Lawrence Durrell, *Prospero's Cell* and *Spirit of Place* (both published by Faber & Faber); see also Ara Baliozian, "Historian of the Heart," in *Ararat* Quarterly (Winter 1980), and Gostan Zarian, *The Traveller and His Road,* selected, translated, with notes and an introduction by Ara Baliozian (New York: Ashod Press, 1981).

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT:



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Helen Davidian had to overcome in her day much greater obstacles than women writers face today. After all, she was a female who had the temerity to write fiction during the 1930's, in a backward society where women still wrapped themselves in chadors and rarely ventured outside. There were few connections with Western culture and almost no encouragement to create. However, Helen Davidian persisted in her ambition and succeeded in becoming the first Armenian woman who was published in both Armenian and English, our first truly bilingual woman writer.

This accomplishment is not only a tribute to her talent and her devotion to her art, but it is also a testimony to the quality of spirit that has enabled Armenians everywhere to endure the most difficult of circumstances and to remain creative while doing so. It seems quite fitting to the editors of* Ararat *that she should be honored in her own lifetime by this publication of her best stories as a collection. It is also appropriate that the first critical appreciation of her work in English should be written by a young Armenian who hopes to follow in her illustrious footsteps as a writer of distinction.

—Leo Hamalian, the editor

Pioneer Among

By Mark Arax

In 1932, in a small northeast Persian village, Helen Davidian would wake up at four in the morning and write short stories while her husband and children slept. At a time when few Armenian women dared to write, Davidian's stories were being published in a Teheran daily newspaper and the *Hairenik Monthly* in Boston.

"Four to seven in the morning was the best time to write," remembers the 77-year-old Davidian. "I had at least three hours of quiet before the family would awaken. I would go into the library and write longhand. I never liked the sound of a typewriter, it disturbed me."

The gray-haired, rosy-cheeked Davidian also recalls the early morning chill that started in her big toe and traveled up to her knees as she wrote in her small library. But the cold was merely an inconvenience; Davidian had to overcome much bigger obstacles in her day. After all, she was an Armenian women writing stories in the 1930's that were critical of a backward society where women wrapped themselves in chadors and rarely ventured outside.

The subordinate role of women in Persia bothered Davidian and was a factor in much of her writing. "We had Persian neighbors on both sides of our house. I never saw the wife on one side. Every morning her tall husband put a big padlock on the top latch of their front door and went away. It upset me immensely," says Davidian. "Why does he lock his wife up every day? I used to ask my mother. I always got the same answer. 'When you grow up you will understand.'"

Before long Davidian had the answer to her question. "He wanted to protect his wife from other lovers. Maybe she was pretty. Maybe he was afraid she would wrap herself in the chador and go to the bazaar and take a lover," Davidian says. "But the man was allowed to take two or three wives. The men had a free hand in everything."

In one of her early stories titled "The Jealous Wife," Davidian struck back at the double standard through the character Zobayda (the story was later published in an anthology called *A World of Great Stories*, Crown Publishing). Zobayda sets out to find her husband, who has not been home in three days. She disguises herself as a fortune-telling gypsy and goes to the home of her husband's lover. There, she finds his hat and cane in a corner of the bedroom. Still disbelieving, Zobayda hears a voice from behind the heavy bedroom curtain. It is her husband's. Zobayda becomes enraged and runs out of the room cursing to herself. "This stinking woman! A leftover from a thousand men! She is the one you choose! You worthless dog!"

Among her better short stories, "The Jealous Wife" is also a determined attempt to deal openly with "forbidden subjects"—the use of opium by Persian men, infidelity and harlotry. The story was turned down by the Armenian press as offensive. "Realistically speaking, the husband's lover was a prostitute," says Davidian. "That was a fact of life and I was trying to reflect it. It

Helen Savidian: Persian Women



is not a 'dirty' story and I never thought twice while I was writing it. But because of those details I was exposing the faults of the Persian men and most of my stories did not pass the censor."

Unlike many other Armenian females growing up in the 1920's, Helen Davidian was encouraged by her parents to pursue a profession. She also grew up questioning the role distinction between men and women in Persian and Armenian society. This gave her the critical eye to develop many of her story themes.

"My parents always told us to have a profession. They were not narrowminded and that was quite odd for their time," says Davidian. "My mother was a very liberated woman. She told us that girls are no different from boys and this had a great influence on me. If I put my mind to anything, she would tell us, I could do anything I wanted."

Davidian chuckled when asked if she would call herself an early-day "women's libber." "I wouldn't say that, but why did I complain to my father about the restrictions put on the Iranian girls?" she asked rhetorically.

Helen Davidian was born Heghineh Eleazarian in Tehran, in 1902. Her father was a native of Tehran and her mother was born in Van, Armenia. Her uncle Vertanes Papasian was one of the most highly regarded Armenian writers of his time. Helen's father, Iskouhi, spoke Persian, French, and Armenian and because of this linguistic ability he worked in governmental positions. Helen was one of six children—three girls and three boys.

She grew up in affluence in a two-story white brick home with maid service and a backyard swimming pool. She was educated in the American Missionary School of Tehran, and there learned more about the geography and history of America than about Persia or Armenia. This curriculum aroused her interest in America, and she dreamed of one day visiting the United States.

"Armenia seemed to me a distant land, lost and buried in the haze of ancient history," Davidian wrote in 1941 in an unpublished article titled "Notes About Myself." "I was always dreaming of America. Two of my classmates shared my dreams. We were planning to raise money in some way and secretly run away to America. Our secret plan occupied our minds day and night, until one morning one of the girls, whose brother was a lawyer, came to school with a long face, called us aside and said, 'Girls, do you know what has happened? They have closed the gates of America and all the immigrants must wait for their turns according to the quota for their country.' We were awfully disappointed and all three of us sat down on the school lawn studded with violets and cried bitterly and repeated, 'What shall we do now? What shall we do now?'"

A few months before Helen was graduated from high school, her father died. Shortly after his death, Helen's married sister died during childbirth and her brother, who had just returned home from the war, died of gunshot wounds while on a hunting excursion. The loss of her father, sister, and brother in such quick, tragic succession affected Davidian deeply. She wrote about it in "Notes About Myself":

"It seemed to me as if long years had passed and I had suddenly grown older. My sister, a nurse, and I had to take care of my mother, and we were strangers in the city of Isfahan."

Before moving from Teheran to Isfahan, Davidian joined a literary union, and, for the first time, discovered that she could write. One day, the leader of the union asked the group to build a story from a simple outline. Helen won third place among twenty-five stories submitted. "When the leader announced my name and read my story, the members looked at me in amazement and some of them remarked, 'Of course she ought to write well! Isn't she the niece of Vertanes Papasian, the writer?'"

In 1923, Davidian with her sister and mother moved to Kerman in South Persia. Davidian taught in the English Missionary School. "As a teacher, I came in close contact with all classes of people. I loved the Persian women for their good nature and hospitality. Their religion, their customs, and superstitions had impressed their minds so deeply that they looked upon everybody and everything outside their faith as unclean," Davidian wrote. "When I visited their homes I noticed that the maid servant would carefully set aside my empty teacup, as if it were used by a diseased person, or she would take it immediately to the pool and rinse it three times to make it clean according to the rules of their religion."

In 1925, Davidian, then twenty-three, met a young Armenian-American rug buyer who was on a business trip in Kerman. A year later she was engaged to Levon Davidian. When the young rug buyer was instructed by his New York-based firm to move his office to Hamadan, 750 miles north of Kerman, the two were hastily married. They lived in Hamadan six years before moving to Sultanabad, 100 miles to the east. It was during this time that Davidian began writing more frequently. She joined the Ladies Educational Society in Sultanabad and wrote plays for the organization's activities and short stories that were published in the *Alik*, the Armenian daily newspaper of Tehran. "Gradually, I felt a powerful urge to write stories. An inner demand

seemed to induce me to write against injustice, against an oppressive social atmosphere, and I conceived and created the leading character of my first story after my own ideal, in accordance with which I wanted to see people live and act."

Much of Davidian's earlier writings deal with life in Iran, about the social disparity in men's and women's roles, about desert caravans and about rugs—an outgrowth of her increasingly active interest in her husband's business. One of her earlier stories, "The Singer of the Caravan," is based upon an actual experience, like most of her other stories about Persian life as perceived by a woman.

Another such story is "Bibi Djan, the Rug Weaver," about a young woman who decides to give birth in the traditional way, with the assistance of a midwife, instead of in a hospital. Bibi Djan is confronted by two English nurses who try to convince her that giving birth in a hospital is much safer (as Helen Davidian's sister used to advise the Persian women of the 1930's). Bibi Djan, sceptical of modern medicine, thinks that hospitals are places where people go to die. The story deals with the classic conflict between the old and the new, tradition and technology, and Davidian plays up this dichotomy in a way that parallels events in contemporary Iran.

In 1937, Davidian and her husband, Levon, moved to New York with their three children. There, Levon became a well-known importer of Oriental and Persian rugs, and today, at 76, he still operates the business. The Davidian's two sons own one of the largest rug-importing businesses in Cleveland, and their only daughter recently joined the New York firm as a saleswomen.

Davidian found little time to write while raising and caring for her family. When she did write, it was about life in America and the cultural shock she experienced. Davidian describes this shock in a story titled "Her First Winter in America" (not included here). The character Emma is Davidian herself. She wrote: "In Emma's mind, nothing seemed compatible. Her new atmosphere was so different from where she had come. The change was too great to be able to bear without a struggle. Her mind was working like a see-saw, going back and forth from one continent to another.

"When I came to America with my family in 1937, I felt as if I was on another planet," says Helen Davidian. "Every little thing interested, amazed, and pleased me. One thing that pleased me the most was the abundance of books and libraries. I found all kinds of books to my taste and liking," she said. "I can't forget the deep impression and the enthusiasm with which I read Pearl S. Buck's books. I felt as if she was the answer to all my doubts and hesitations."

Davidian's stories have appeared in the *Hairenik Monthly, Nor Kir* (New Letters) *Quarterly,* the *Armenian Red Cross Quarterly,* and *Hairenik Daily* of Boston. Many of her stories were censored in Persia because they were critical of Persian life, religion, and ironclad customs. In 1945, Davidian published a book of short stories in Armenian called *Destiny.*

Davidian stopped writing short stories in 1950. For the next twenty years, the only writing she did was for rug sales pamphlets designed for the family business. "I couldn't write, I didn't feel like writing," she said. "I was unable to produce."

While looking over some old notes and stories in 1970, Davidian got the urge to rewrite several of her old pieces. She even rewrote a children's book that had never been published. "Writing is everything to my life and when I stopped I felt that I was just surviving, not living," she said. "I wasn't satisfied, I wasn't fulfulled."

Today, Davidian is writing the first draft of her husband's life story—how he lost his father in 1909 in the Adana Massacre, came to the United States at age 5 and was raised in a Catholic orphanage in Boston, was sent back to Turkey, at the age of twelve, where he had to live with a cruel uncle and to suffer through the 1915 massacre. "The unimaginable hardships and tortures couldn't break his spirit. He didn't lose his sense of humor and is one of the best persons I have ever known," says Davidian. "The story is, of course, for posterity. The children and grandchildren always want to know."

Since coming to America in 1937, Davidian has looked to Pearl S. Buck as her inspiration. One of Buck's passages is particularly close to Davidian's heart. It reads: "The truly creative mind in any field is no more than this: a human creature born abnormally, inhumanly sensitive. To him a touch is a blow, a sound is a noise, a misfortune is a tragedy, a joy is an ecstasy, a friend is a lover, a lover is a God, and failure is death. Add to this cruelly delicate organism the overpowering necessity to create, create, create—so that without the creating of music or poetry or books or buildings or something of meaning, his very breath is cut off from him. He must create, must pour out creation. By some strange, unknown, inward urgency he is not really alive unless he is creating."

Said Davidian: "I've never read anything more beautiful than that. Words don't make writers, feelings make writers. I think that's what Pearl Buck meant. I feel something when I look around and see things that most people see and take for granted. I have felt it so many times."



Kerman, Iran (1922)



Teheran (1939)
Vic, Helen, Baby Nora, John Davidians

My Persian Legacy

By Helen Davidian



New York (1955)

I was born in Tehran, Iran, of Armenian parents. My father was from Tehran, my mother was born in Van, Armenia, and was the sister of the novelist Vertanes Papasian. My mother taught me to read and write long before I went to school. She had been a teacher in her father's school in Tabriz.

As a child everything aroused my curiosity. We used to have Persian neighbors on both sides of our house. On one side the wife was a tall, elegant, and fast-moving lady. Every day she went shopping. She would put a big bundle on her head, hold her child by the hand, and walk home as gracefully as a well-dressed woman in her high-heeled shoes. She was an excellent conversationalist. I loved to listen to her talk.

I never saw the wife on the other side. Every morning her tall husband put a big padlock on the top latch of their street door and went away. It upset me immensely. I made a point to be close by and watch him come back and unlock the door. He worked so fast that I never got a chance to peek in even once.

"Why does he lock up his wife every day?" I used to ask my mother very often. I always got the same answer.

"When you grow up you will understand."

I attended the American Missionary School in Tehran. My classmates were Persian, Assyrian, Jewish, and Armenian girls. Our teachers were mostly Americans.



Our Cleveland store (1977)
Helen & Levon Davidian

After I graduated from the American school, my family moved to Kerman, where I taught in the English Missionary School. My pupils were all Persian girls.

By nature and inheritance I have never felt prejudice toward anyone. I guess my Persian friends, my pupils, and their families felt it. Many a time, one or the other exclaimed with regret, "I wish you were a Persian so you could marry my son or my brother." (Mixed marriages are taboo.)

I always felt that some day I would like to be a writer. My circumstances were unfavorable for writing. As a teacher my hands were full, but unconsciously, my mind was absorbing valuable material for stories all along.

In Kerman, I met and married a young Armenian who had come from New York as a rug buyer. Soon after, we were transferred to Hamadan and later to Arak.

Married life and raising a family left me little time for serious writing, though once in a while I wrote an article, a short story, or a sketch for the Armenian papers in Tehran.

When I came to America with my family in 1937, I felt as if I was on another planet. Every little thing interested, amazed, and pleased me: little things, like the pedal on the kitchen garbage can that saves the housewife the trouble of bending down; or the little spout on the salt box. But the one thing which pleased me most was the abundance of books and libraries. I found all kinds of books to my taste and liking. I couldn't stop reading and deep in my heart I thanked my parents for sending me to the American school. Now I was able to read any English book in its original language.

I cannot forget the deep impression and the enthusiasm with which I read the books of Pearl S. Buck. I felt as if she was the answer to all my doubts and hesitations. Here she was, an American author writing about Chinese people. I could never imagine that one day I would meet her, correspond with her, and work with her.

Pearl Buck was the president of the East-West Association, of which I was a member. The Association published *Asia* Magazine, and her husband, Richard Walsh, was the editor. When I submitted my story, "The Jealous Wife," to *Asia,* Richard Walsh wrote back, "It is a great pleasure to us to see the work of a writer who has the same degree of interest in and feeling for the Middle East that Pearl Buck has had for the people of the Far East and you may be assured that we shall take the greatest interest in all that you do."

In 1945 I published a book of short stories in Armenian called *Destiny.* The stories are fiction, but based upon true happenings.

After 40 years, I decided to visit Iran once more. In 1977, just a few months before the revolution, I journeyed back. This time I saw a different breed of people, more daring, more rebellious, more ambitious, though the national traditions, superstitions, prejudice and fatalism were still very strong. It still existed within the ranks of ethnic groups. The physical appearance of the towns had changed and a fight between the new and the old had started. One could feel the silent unrest everywhere.

Years ago, when Persian women were desperate, their only salvation was suicide by swallowing a piece of opium. But the strong desire for freedom has taught them to fight back, and they do.

Today, if I were to write about Iran, this is what I would depict. Iran is in a state of spasm, struggling for a way out. The strong and the fierce conflict. The clash between the holders of old traditions and the craving to accept the new ways of the modern world by the young is very much alive.

Many times, over the years, for one reason or another or for no reason at all, I have decided to quit writing. But writing is an addiction. It sneaks up on you unexpectedly. Payment or prestige is not the motive. One inner storm, one flood of emotion is enough to push you back to your good old habit: writing.



THE SINGER OF THE CARAVAN

We had traveled together every day for weeks. He had served me in small ways, but I had not studied his face closely.

He seemed to avoid my searching eyes, but, whichever way I turned, I saw his face, not his whole face, but only a part of it. His forehead was covered under a pale-green turban and his chin was half covered with the high collar of his coat. His slender, tall figure was wrapped in a long coat, reaching far down below his knees. Wherever I looked I seemed to see his faded green turban.

That night suddenly a voice awakened me. I listened intently. It seemed to me as if someone were talking to himself in the dark. I was very tired from the day's journey. I must have slept again, because I was startled out of my sleep and could not close my eyes again. A sweet song in a very soft tone floated up from beneath my window. Gradually the tone increased and became sweeter. I listened. Had I ever heard that voice before? I rummaged through the leaves of my memory in vain. I had never heard it before.

The tone of the song would sometimes get higher, sometimes softer, and then would turn into a dialogue, but it would not go away from under my window. I could not tell what hour of the night it was. But I felt I had had enough of sleep and rest. Out of curiosity I got up suddenly, went to the window, and craned my neck trying to see the unknown singer.

Everything seemed to have been enchanted by his song. The sky seemed lower, and the stars seemed to have gathered together above his head. And I heard no other sound. Even the mountain wind silently listened to his sweet song.

He sang ceaselessly, song after song, always sad and always touching.

He sang of the nightingale and the rose, Laila and Majnoon, the moth and the lamp, the colorful dreams of life beyond the grave and the vanity of the world.

The blood seemed to curdle in my veins. My soul seemed to take wings in harmony with the waves of his voice, and soar high up into space. What wonderful visions ran through my mind! On the wings of his voice I descended into the depths of the earth, and rose to the heights of the sky. I felt the love of the nightingale and mourned the sad fate of the helpless moth.

Soon his song became a tale of the wonders of creation and the thrilling rememberance of ancient days.

I strained my eyes, but could not see the singer in the darkness below.

The constellations in the sky shifted their positions and one could feel the coming of the king of the stars—the Sun.

The voice was silent at last. Bells began to tinkle on all

sides. Orders were shouted right and left. The caravan was getting ready to move.

Hastily I returned to my bed. I could rest a little while longer and gather my thoughts, and then return from dreams to reality.

After breakfast I packed my luggage and went down hurriedly. I could hardly see my way down. In the courtyard the lanterns were lit and the men were getting ready to start.

I left my belongings with the leader of the caravan and asked him, "Who was the singer of the night?"

The singer of the night?" he echoed, puzzled, casting an inquiring eye about him.

Everyone laughed.

"It must have been you," said the leader of the caravan, turning to one of his muleteers. Your singing must have disturbed the lady last night."

It was he, the young man with the faded green turban.

"My companions fooled me," replied the singer in a guilty tone. "They told me we were not leaving this morning, because the caravan was still tired, and had to rest for the day. They begged me to sing for them during the night, and I sang."

Everyone roared with laughter.

Poor muleteer, he had sung all night, while everyone else slept peacefully to the lullaby of his magic voice.

The caravan was ready. Everyone mounted his mule and we resumed our journey over the endless desert.

As soon as the blue horizon in the East was decorated with the morning star and the crescent of the moon, the voice of the singer rose again.

His song, sometimes in the open spaces of the desert, and sometimes in the curves of the mountains, always accompanied by the tinkling of the bells of the caravan, rose up and melted in the air.

Enchanted by his singing, we did not even notice that we had reached our last stop. In the evening, the mules unloaded, we were resting. I went out of the dark room of the caravanserai for a short walk in the open air. And I saw him at last. He was sitting by the brook, his coat and turban at his side, his sleeves rolled up. He was washing his face.

What a clean, milk-white and broad forehead he had, and what black curly hair covering the nape of his neck, and what big expressive eyes! A very fine figure he made. His age? No more than twenty-two or perhaps younger. To me he had looked twice that, because of his large pale-green turban and his big coat.

I looked at him and said to myself, "Sing, muleteer boy, sing as long as you please. But you will never be able to repeat the songs you sang last night. . ."



THE NIGHTINGALE ON THE ROSEBUSH RUG

When I stepped into the women's quarters from the main garden, I thought I had arrived at a most inopportune moment and I was getting ready to turn back when she saw me from the other end of the courtyard and called in a cheerful voice.

"Welcome, welcome, Mademoiselle Hellene." (She called me "M.H." and insisted on my calling her "Jamil Joone," regardless of all her titles of royal ancestry.)

"Come in. You could not have come at a better time. I was going to send for you. I am going to show you something. Come in, but you see what we are up to. We have 'house shaking' [spring cleaning in a big way] today. Try to find a way and walk in," she called and laughed aloud.

The courtyard was in a mess. The furniture of all the rooms was displayed outside, everything was piled here and there. The rugs and carpets were piled over each other and some were spread out in the sun. The place looked like an auction house.

I had to take giant steps, or go around the furniture not to topple over the tables and sofas.

The occasion of my visit to Jamil Joone, on that summer morning, was to bid her goodbye before the school vacation started and talk to her about her daughter. It happened that I had arrived on their "house-shaking" day and it really looked like house-shaking business. All the doors and windows were wide open, the drapes pulled down and the empty rooms were exposed to the bright rays of the sun. The heavy drapes were folded and piled up on a table and carefully covered up, but the large rugs and carpets were purposely spread out in the hot sun to soften the bright colors uniformly.

Without tripping on anything, I was trying to walk carefully through the edges of the large carpets, while Jamil Joone watched me from a distance. She watched me for a while and then called out laughingly.

"Don't be afraid, Mademoiselle, step on the rugs. Those rugs look dainty but they are not fragile. The more you use them, the better they look. Step on them freely."

That morning Jamil Joone looked really busy. Standing by the pond, her sleeves rolled up, she was throwing tiny pieces of bread to the goldfish and was watching the maids do their house-cleaning chores, when I got to her.

The women's quarters looked like a separate garden by itself. We sat down on the bench under the shade of

the weeping willow tree. After investigating each other's disposition and finding it in tip-top shape, she didn't give me time for extra conversation but ordered refreshments immediately.

"She must have something important to show me or else she wouldn't rush things like this," I thought and wasn't mistaken.

It did not take five minutes. The maids brought tea and sweetmeats and from the other end of the garden, the gardener brought some freshly picked jumbo strawberries with platefuls of baby cucumbers which still retained the fresh yellow flowers on their tips.

While eating, Jamil Joone asked a few brief questions about the school. She commented on the good work we were doing for the education of their young daughters. Then she listened with satisfaction as I related her daughter's progress. Then, looking at my face attentively, she smiled and said, "So you are going to get married soon."

"No, not very soon," I replied.

"Good. Now I want to ask you something. Tell me, Mademoiselle Hellene, have you started your rug yet?"

"My rug!" I exclaimed in surprise. (I thought she referred to my weaving a rug as she had done at a tender age.)

The surprised look on my face amused her and she began to laugh in a ringing voice, saying, "I don't mean weaving your rug. I know that you can't weave. I wish you could. I wish more ladies would take rug weaving as a hobby. I don't know why they don't, it is so much fun. I didn't mean weaving, I meant choosing the rug for your home." (In the sense of the bride-to-be starting her chinaware.) "Now tell me," she went on enthusiastically, "tell me, have you bought any rug yet? No? Well, then, how can you get married without buying at least one small rug? What will a room, which is beautifully furnished with drapes, lamps and sofas, and you may have even bought some oil paintings look like, without the colorful rug on the floor? A multicolor rug to match and reveal and display the beauty of all these other articles. . . That room of yours will look like a pretty girl, very well dressed, with all her jewelry, but without high-heeled shoes on."

"You are right," I said with a smile, comparing the picture in my mind. "You are right, Jamil Joone."

"In my opinion, Mademoiselle Hellene," she continued, "every girl should start her home with a rug and then, by and by, fill in the gaps. If they start with a large rug, you are lucky. You match the furniture and the drapes with it more easily.

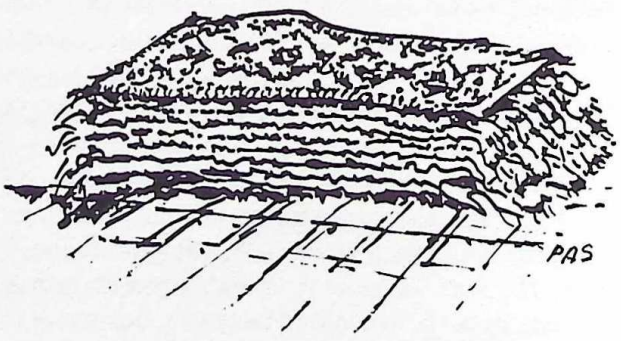
"Now, today, I want to give you, as a present, a little rug. That was the reason I wanted to see you and by coincidence, Allah led your steps to our threshold. Now, if you excuse me, in a minute I will put the work in order and we will go inside," she remarked, giving orders to the maids in rapid succession.

From the opposite side of the courtyard, we walked together and a maid followed us a few steps behind. We went down to their second basement, which Jamil Joone called the "pond house." It was an oblong room with tall windows and ivory tile walls and floor. There was a long shallow pond in the center of the room.

By the wall stood a pile of 2 x 3 rugs, all J. J.'s handiwork. She had made them during the course of many years. The pond house felt cool and comfortable after the warm sun of the courtyard. The maid offered me a regular chair and to her lady, a special large-sized straw-bottomed chair. "I can't squeeze in those little things," she said and laughed. "I don't know why, but it looks as if I put on weight even if I only smell food. But men like plump women. You should put on some weight, Mademoiselle Hellene," she remarked looking at my thin figure. I thought, but did not speak, that if I were ever to become as plump as she, I would not be able to move my body around as lightly as she did.

After making herself comfortable on the straw-bottomed chair, she took the bamboo fan and fanning herself incessantly, said, "Mademoiselle Hellene, I feel as if if I am giving my own sister away as a bride. Now, please do feel free and choose any one of the rugs that the maid is about to show you. You know that for every one of those rugs I have used the same quality of wool and dye, without exception, and that if the best quality that. . . .", she said and did not finish her sentence. Her glance froze in space and she looked sad.

I understood her and remarked, "You are reminiscing about your dowry rug with your initials on it. I know, you have made these rugs as fine as the other one, but the other one was different." Jamil Joone's face brightened.



"How could you guess? That is right, my dowry rug was different," she said in a weak voice but quickly pushed her sad thoughts back and called the maid in a

cheerful voice, "Sakineh, open those rugs for Mademoiselle."

The maid started to spread out the 2 x 3 colorful rugs on the tiled floor, side by side. All were pretty. You could not point out or make any particular preference at first sight, excepting two small rugs. One had a background of dark navy blue, almost black in intensity with an unusual design, and the other an ivory background with a mixed design in tints and shades of green, resembling a pattern of leaves of all colors, tinted with pink, red, and gold.

I was looking at the navy-blue rug attentively, while Jamil Joone was talking. "I made all these little pieces for the girls in our family to start them right on their house decorating. But, I still am making one special piece for my daughter. The rascal has no patience to sit down and weave and I do not have the heart to force her to work as they did to me. This spoiled new generation!"

My attention was on the blue rug and she noticed it and changed her subject at once. "I see that you like that plain navy-blue rug with the nightingale on the rosebush," and called the maid. "Sakineh, hold up that blue rug and let Mademoiselle look at it. Stand closer to the pond."

The long white cotton fringes hung loose in a row of even lines. On a dark ground covering only three-quarters of the rug stood a rose bush with red rose buds and tender green leaves and a tiny nightingale sitting on a branch singing at the top of his voice. The top part of the rug was woven in plain navy blue, almost as dark as black. "This is a very odd piece and odd design," I mumbled in amazement.

"Yes, you are right," she said in a serious voice. "This is an odd piece and odd design and I made up the design myself and not intentionally, but it just happened. Would you like to hear about it?" she asked, fanning herself slowly. "Surely," I said and got ready to hear an interesting incident.

She put her bamboo fan in her lap and looking at the dancing gold fish in the pond, she started in a soft voice, as if not to be heard by any one else but herself.

"The time I wove that rug, I was desperately in need of sympathy. I was attracted to someone whose name shouldn't even have been mentioned in our house. I knew it was a hopeless case, but what could I do? I was young and the time was spring and I couldn't go to sleep at nights. The roses were blooming in our garden, nightingales were singing and the love calls of the frogs sounded far and near, by brooks and I was all alone in my grief. I couldn't sing like the free birds did; I couldn't shout from the roof tops, so what did I do? I captured the nightingale and his song (which sounded like the echo of my depressed soul), and put it in that little rug. See, how the nightingale's throat is quivering with the notes of his love song. See, how the petals of the rose bud start to open under the spell of his magic song! I caught his picture in my mind and put it in that rug while I heard him singing. I wove that piece only at nights. I had to shade my lamp carefully not to be noticed by anyone. Sitting by the open windows, I was weaving unconsciously, while the night was black and the sky dark blue. I could hear the nightingale singing on the rose bush and his song was full of sweet sadness."

When Jamil Joone stopped talking, it seemed to me as if I still heard the echo of her soft voice. For a while I kept silent and then said, "But what is the use of talking about it, J. J.? All is past and gone," I said sympathetically.

She sat up straight in the chair, took the fan and fanning herself in a hurry, said, "Yes, you are right. What is the use of talking about it. Now you are attracted to that rug, take it," she said and looking at the rug once more called the maid. "Sakineh, roll up that blue rug and put it aside for Mademoiselle." "The blue rug?" asked the maid in suspicion. "Yes, Sakineh, the blue rug with the nightingale on the rose bush, and don't worry, Sakineh, I won't change my mind.

"Roll it up and put it aside. Whom else could I present better than my daughter's teacher? For my daughter, first Allah. Second, her parents, third, her teacher. Don't worry, Sakineh, I won't change my mind this time."

I thanked Jamil Joone for the high honor and the very precious gift, but I thought to myself how am I to match my other rugs with such a dark color?

I suppose Jamil Joone was thinking the same thing, for she said, "But Mademoiselle Hellene, this rug won't serve your purpose in your decorating task. Next time you come I will show you that green one. You see that one with ivory background in the middle of the row? I have named that 'The Forest Scene.'"

I looked at it. That was the same rug which had attracted my attention already. "If you like green color, 'The Forest Scene' is the thing for you," she said and got up, pushing her chair aside.

I got up too. I knew I was taking up her time. A few maids were waiting by the pond to get new instructions and finish the "house-shaking" job they had started before the sunrise.

I parted with the promise to go back in the near future. I knew that there was an unusual treat in store for me to hear all about the rug Jamil Joone had named "The Forest Scene."



THE RUG WITH HER INITIALS

In Kerman, when she heard that my fiance was a rug buyer from America, she wanted to see me. Her daughter was my pupil in the English missionary school. I didn't hesitate to go and visit her.

She was a grand lady in her late fifties. One look at her and you could trace the noble birth on her beautiful face. She was a far descendent of Iran's Kajar dynasty. Her ladylike manners and soft speech urged deep respect.

Her elaborate house was immaculate and neat. On the floor of the spacious living room there was a wall to wall light blue Kerman Rug, with a large medallion in the center.

We sat down on the soft cushions, and after the customary greetings, she came to the point.

"So you are going to America," she said.

"It will take me quite a while, yet," I replied.

"It doesn't matter," she continued, "the favor which I am going to ask of you is something that will never be too late and will never grow old. Now listen carefully."

"I am all ears," I said.

"You already know our family customs and traditions. You know how we get engaged from the time of birth, into a suitable family, and we have to provide for a suitable dowry. But, this is not the question; my request is something else. My request is that when you go to America, I want you to find my dowry rug, which I have made with my own hands. Do you have time? I want to tell you the story from the beginning," she said, when she noticed the surprised look on my face.

"Of course I have time," I answered.

Her manner of speech was fascinating. I could listen to her for hours.

She made herself comfortable on the cushion and the maids brought in some refreshment. After they left the room she started her story.

"I was only six years old then. One day my mother called me in from the garden—'Jamileh,' she said, (whenever she called me 'Jamileh' instead of 'Jamil Joon', I knew that she had something serious to tell), "your playing days are over. You are a grown-up girl now and you have to start weaving your dowry rug. The loom is all ready, go inside, your teacher is waiting for you," she said, and snatched my rag doll. "That was the end of my childhood. Six days of the week and ten to twelve hours of the day I had to take lessons from different teachers. It was either rug weaving, knitting, sewing, reading, writing, memorizing prayers, or learning passages from the Holy Koran.

"Deep in my heart I hated everything and everybody. Sometimes I almost hated even my beloved Mother, God bless her soul. I thought she was to blame for everything, but later I found out that she was trying to raise me according to the standard of our high society.

"My rug-weaving teacher was my favorite; she was a good-natured old woman and was on my side all the time.

"I decided to take revenge on my dowry rug. I decided to spoil it absolutely. In our family it was taboo to put your initials on the rug you wove. 'Who knows', my Mother used to say, 'Who knows, the wheel of the universe may turn us downward sometime. Then, if we be obliged to sell our rugs, we shall be in disgrace if our initials are on it.'

"And that was just what I intended to do; weave my initials in my rug.

"My father was at the peak of his glory at that time. For my dowry they had sheared the wool of the tenderest sheep, year after year.

"The wool was washed and treated and was as soft as the softest silk can be. It was dyed with the utmost care and with the choicest dyes of the day. I had the most beautiful color of Persian Red, Persian Blue, Mohammed Rose Pink, and Green to match, and Light Gold Yellow. They had put up a beautiful loom for my rug. There were many different designs hung on the walls for me to choose from. Luckily I had to choose my own design. I didn't like any of theirs. I was good in drawing and with the help of my teacher, I drew my own design—whatever came into my childish mind."

"Now listen carefully while I describe my rug to you," she said in a serious tone. "You have to keep this in mind if you intend to find my rug. But, please, when you find it, don't mention my name, I shall be disgraced."

I promised her, I gave my word of honor not to mention her name, but now I feel that I can tell about her and even give her name. First of all, she is not living, and secondly, the times have changed so much, that even if the lady, Jamil Joone, was alive, she wouldn't mind my giving her name and the special message she gave about Oriental rugs, together with her own story.

"My rug is a Dozar, maybe a little longer than a Dozar," she went on. "I wove the first four-inch border in light gold background, with a chain of multicolor rosebuds."

"The second border was ten inches wide, with small garlands of imaginary flowers, roses and leaves linked together. But I broke the ten-inch border in the corners. Why did I break the ten-inch border in the corners? Because I wanted to put my initials somewhere around there for sure. Then. I thought of our beautiful



antique flower vase in Persian Blue, and I decided to put in that design. So I put a ten-inch tall flower vase in blue in each corner and wove fine leaves of gold on the vase. In the center of each vase, I put two diamond shaped designs in solid red and in the middle of the red diamonds I put my initials (J.J.*) in gold.

"There was supposed to be a medallion in the center of the rug, but I changed my mind and instead I put a small garland to match the borders. Now listen carefully," she said with enthusiasm, "Listen to what I did. Starting from the four corners and climbing up, I put in four rose bushes in beautiful green. I decorated the rose bushes, all over, with small red blossoms. The center garland disappeared in the branches of the rose bushes.

"It took me years to finish the rug. When finished, it came out to be a beautiful, beautiful piece. It was softer than silk and finer than tapestry," she said, as if talking to herself. "Why did I put my initials on it? Why did I disobey my mother? Now I am disgraced," and turning to me, she said again, "Please, don't tell them my name."

"I wove that rug with my tender fingers and childish thoughts. I grew up with it day by day; every year a little more matured. I wove my bright dreams in every garland. I put my future desires in every rosebud. My childhood happiness, my awakening youth were all expressed and all woven in that beautiful little rug, day in and day out. And now, whoever owns it, she will not understand. She will take it as an ordinary floor covering. Please, when you find my rug, together with my prayer and blessing, tell the owner to take good care of it. Let her know that it is not just an ordinary rug. It is not made with the iron needle of a machine. There is a little girl's wish mingled with every rosebud, you see. There is even a teardrop of joy shed on the petals of the flowers. My tender fingers have run through every single knot, and there are tens of thousands of knots in every square foot, believe me. If you would take the time and count, you will see I am right. It is not just a rug made of iron needle of a machine."

"But why did you sell that precious rug," I asked surprised?" "That is a family secret," she said, lowering her voice. The maids were around the room putting platefuls of fresh fruits. "My brother (God bless his soul) was a gambler. He took it from me, even before I got married. An American buyer gave him a good price, he needed the money and sold it. I didn't even get a chance to use it, but no one can erase the memory of the rug from my mind."

She finished her story and sat there silently meditating. I didn't dare disturb her.

After a while she was her cheerful self again and said. "Please take this message to them from me." (Whom did she mean? At that minute, I didn't realize). "Let them know that all our rugs, not only mine, but generally all our rugs are woven with the tender fingers of our young generation.

"We weave, we finish them with high hopes, and very often we never see the rug after it is cut down from the looms. Tell them that after you buy those colorful rugs, look at those beautiful designs at your leisure time. If you look with patience and with searching eyes, you will find an unusual flower and a new color of leaf in the garland, which was hidden from your sight while you were buying the rug in a hurry. Take your time and look at it again carefully, just the way you would look at an oil painting.

"And, who knows? If you are lucky, you may even find my initials in the four corners of the rug (J. J.)*, which stands for Jamil Joone (Jamileh Darling)," she said and laughed heartily. Jamil Joone looked so sweet when she laughed.

*J. J. equivalent in Persian.

DIARY OF A PERSIAN GIRL



Through the narrow lane of the cypress trees Malektaj was walking together with her aunt. She had been raised by her aunt and now they were very close and inseparable friends.

Holding her diary tightly under her arm, she walked a few steps ahead of her aunt. Looking up at the tall cypress trees she tried to locate the evening crickets. The air was full of the fragrance of tender leaves. The shepherd's flute rolled music down the hill.

They were in their summer home. Every evening they took the same walk before sunset to relax by the stream.

They removed their light *chadours,* folded them and placed them in the fork of a tree nearby.

Malektaj sat upon a rock, her diary in her lap, and gazed at the sunset. The sun had sunk behind the mountain, weaving a wine-colored ribbon on the horizon. Her aunt, stretching on the grass, looked at the sky and said, "Tomorrow is going to be a very hot day, Malektaj." She closed her eyes to take a nap.

Malektaj didn't hear her, sitting on a rock leaning against a tree trunk. She was gazing dreamily at the flow of the running water, and breathing in deeply the cool evening air. She plucked some leaves off a nearby bush, crushed them, and cast them into the running water one after another. The warble of a nightingale was heard from a distance. A breeze, passing through the treetops, swished the leaves.

Whether it was the effect of the refreshing cool air or the enchantment of the twilight—she could not explain, but she felt an inner stirring, something very unusual. But no, not unusual, but rather a distant, forgotten, and disturbing emotion, both a sort of sublimation and a vigorous vivacity. Wholly refreshed, her veins beat with youthful blood. Her heart commenced to pound fiercely. She felt as if she had never been hurt by the poisonous thorns of unpleasant events. She blushed like a schoolgirl, as in those days when she had loved for the first and the last time in her life. When she had been set aflame with hopes of the future, when her heart had been caressed by dream pleasures. But what did it matter that her hopes had never been realized? What did it matter that everything had been a delusion and a transitory dream? She had felt all that from the depths of her heart and she was content.

Malektaj was confused by her inner disturbance. There had been a time when she had been an ardent writer in her diary. She had written ceaselessly, and reading her own writings she had relived her past moments, happy and sad. But that seemed to her centuries ago. It was a long time since she had written. She had merely avoided remembering the past and had lost her craving for writing.

Malektaj tenderly kept and carried with her her half-written diary in the hope that someday she might be inspired to resume writing, but in vain.

Sitting by the stream and gazing intently at the running water she thought, "Our life, too, comes like this and flows on, comes and goes without leaving a trace or a purpose." Than she plucked some more leaves and cast them away on the flowing water. And suddenly she spied approaching on the water a little yellow and blue bird, caught among the rushes of the opposite bank and held there in front of her eyes. Motionless as a statue, her hands in her lap, green leaves crushed in her palm, Malektaj gazed at the corpse of the bird and shuddered. Bad memories made her shudder. The water flowed on, beating against the wings, tearing them off and carrying them down the river. It seemed to her that she was looking at the picture of her own life and was reading the pages of her own memoirs. A flood of emotion stormed her inside world and she felt an irresistable urge to write again. Hurriedly she opened the book in her lap, but before writing she had a desire to read some of it.

"From the day I was born I was doomed by a whim of fate. I was the sixth daughter to be born to our family. My mother dreaded the thought. Before my birth, my father had threatened my mother, saying, 'If this one, too, is a girl you shall leave this house. I need a boy child.' My mother's heart was atremble. She tried to convince my father that this one would be different from the others. That it would be what he wanted, by all means.

"The day of my arrival swiftly drew nigh. It so happened that my father was away the day I was born. He had gone to the village to check on the crops. My mother was happy that at least that day my father was away.

"At last the fatal moment arrived. And lo! 'God have mercy,' murmured my mother, 'it seems this one too is going to be a girl. My pains have the same course. But didn't everyone assure me that this time it would be different?'

"Thus, I came into the world—a perfect misfortune

for my parents. Whisperings reached my mother's ear, and that much was enough to make her know the truth. She fainted away. When she came to, she cried and refused to see the face of the newly born. 'Let me alone, I don't want to, I will not nourish her. Let her die. Don't let her father know about it until she is dead,' my miserable mother kept repeating.

"When my aunt saw that it was impossible to dissuade my mother from her resolution, she offered to adopt me. My aunt was childless, and my mother agreed. They signed the papers and from then on I became the child of my aunt.

"My father was counting the days. He promised big gifts to the villagers and the Dervishes, if the child was a boy. But the news was delayed. By my father's calculations the event should have already taken place.

"The city was a long way off, quite separate from the village. After long hesitation, and impatient, my father left his work half finished and, riding his horse, came to the city.

"When at last he arrived home, three weeks had elapsed since my birth, and my mother was not there that day. The servants related all the details to my father, who now furious, retired to his room in a sullen mood.

"My mother came home trembling, but my father would not see her, and left the house for good. Months later news came that my father had found another woman. He had married a young girl so he could have a boy child. Very often my aunt has told me the sad story of my birth at my request.

"I am now a schoolgirl. They tell me I am very beautiful. My aunt, disregarding all the national schools in the town, has me enrolled in the American Missionary School.

"Under the influence of my aunt I have formed definite ideas about love and marriage. Her life, which was wrecked in an unfortunate marriage, has given a living lesson to me. She has taught me to look upon men with the utmost contempt. 'They do not deserve your love. They cannot love as unselfishly as women do,' she often told me with bitterness, and I agreed with her.

"Like the rest of my countrywomen, I was obliged to cover my face whenever I went out. But I was a rebel my nature. I did not cover my face in the street. I took advantage of the fact that I had no father to restrain me, nor a brother to rebuke me. And my aunt was lenient with me.

"Our American teachers often advised us to cover our faces, especially when we passed by the boys' school. But I ignored the advice. I knew I was attractive. And why should I cover my face? Why should a display of beauty be considered a sin? I thought. And I begged my aunt to let me go to school without a servant. I was disgusted by the mere looks of those stupid old men walking lazily behind fluttering schoolgirls.

"My schoolmates were envious of me whenever they saw me walking freely in the streets. And every time I passed by the boys' school, I wouldn't look at the boys, but I felt their fiery glances aimed at me, and I blushed.

"Schoolwork came very easy to me, and my grades were excellent. I really studied very little at home. I loved to write, but I would burn what I wrote. Then I began to write again.

"Whenever I was finished with my studies at home, I would ask my aunt to tell me the story of her own life, or the lives of my parents, or of anyone else, provided it were real, exciting, heartrending. And she would always agree gladly.

"Through the school servants I often received letters and colorful cards from the boys. They all brought me the same messages, the same monotonous song. . . they all said they loved me, I looked beautiful to them, so beautiful, with my large, dark eyes, and I was slender and tall and charming.

"I used to show those letters to my aunt. We would read them together with a good deal of pleasure, make fun of them, and then burn them (with the fluttering hearts of the boys enclosed in them).

"It seemed to me that only Persian boys were interested in me. But one day I received an English letter. It was from a Christian boy. That letter upset my entire life. I had often thought of adopting Christianity, marrying a Christian and making a peaceful home of my own. A home where life would be different, altogether different, where I would have equal rights with my husband, and he wouldn't threaten to discard me if I did not bear him a male child.

"I did not read the English letter to my aunt. I asked the school servant to point out the writer, which he did one day. Oh, Creator, how I loved him at first sight! I passed many, many sleepless nights thinking of that boy with red hair and blue eyes. He was so handsome and We both were so blind to the grim realities of life. It didn't take long before we loved each other without thinking of the consequences. We made appointments to meet secretly behind half-wrecked walls of ruined houses, where we stood talking together for hours. Since we could see no one, we thought no one could detect us.

"My aunt noticed the unusual boldness of my conduct. She knew love alone could give a person such extraordinary courage. She did not oppose my love affair, but watched me from a distance.

"Whenever I returned home from the embrace of my

sweetheart and placed an open book in front of me, I couldn't read it; my eyes wandered from the page and I seemed to see nothing but him. And when I tried to read the book my eyes caught his features between the lines.

"He often promised to take me to the farthest corner of the globe and make me the happiest woman in the world. I believed him. Ah, I still believe he would have been mine if they had only let us alone.

"It was the last school day. We had an appointment. My aunt gave me permission to stay out all day. We had planned to go to one of the summer resorts of Teheran. There I was to remove my veil and wear a hat, and we were to walk freely, arm in arm. No one would recognize us there.

"I went to the place of our appointment. He was not there. I was shocked. I was sure he would never be late. I watched for him many long hours. I was so weak I could not move. My hat tucked under my arm, I waited and waited, but he never came.

"Because he was the son of an American missionary, he had been sent back to America without notice. I heard about it later from the school servant. Gradually days of grief changed into hatred of men. I now understood my aunt's advice and securely closed my heart against all love, thinking I would thus escape all suffering. But I was badly mistaken. That was not the end of my sufferings. The worst was yet to come.

"My sisters attended the national school and every one of them became engaged to some rich young man. My mother, now reconciled to her fate, often recalled her past youth and tears welled up in her dried eyes. My father had given himself wholly up to his passions, regardless of his conscience. Whether due to my mother's prayers or some trick of fate, I know not, but none of my father's young brides gave him a son. All four were girls.

* * * * *

"Spring rains had flooded the ditches of Tehran with red water, turning the capitol's avenues into rivers. That was an ominous year for me. One evil day I was invited to dinner at the home of one of my girl friends. The house was on a desolate street, in the city's dead end. I went without my servant. On my way back in the evening I noticed that, in the distance, my father was coming toward me with sluggish steps. I covered my face with my veil so he could not recognize me and hastened my steps. I had walked scarcely forty paces when I heard his voice calling after me, "*kanoum, kanoum*" in a mysterious voice.

I did not know what to do. I tried to get away from him, but he hastened his steps and tried to attract my attention with even more enticing words. As I emerged from the desolate streets I came across a veritable river. It was impossible to cross it. I stood still. My father took advantage of my confusion.

" 'Let us go to my room, *kanoum,*' he whispered, coming closer, 'we'll stay there a while until the waters subside. Don't be bashful. You shall be content.'

"Instantly a devilish plan flashed into my mind. I decided to punish my father and avenge my mother. Ah, how cruel I was at that moment! Forgetting myself, disguising my voice, I whispered, 'Let's go.'

"And he, supremely happy, his fat body wobbling, led me, while I followed him with a fanatical zeal.

"A few minutes later we arrived at a hotel where my father rented a room. We entered. When the door closed after us, without losing time I took off my veil and stood before him like a statue. . . .

"We had met a few times at my aunt's home. He knew my face. I looked exactly like my beautiful mother.

"My father was confounded. He rubbed his fleshy hands together, looked right and left and, suddenly opening the door, dashed out. I followed him, but he had disappeared. A few days later my father's dead body was found on the river bank of his village, caught up amid a clutter of dead logs and roots of trees.

"Besides myself, nobody else ever. . ."

Malektaj could not read her memoirs any further. She felt a sudden ache in her heart. The rise of a suppressed memory shook her frame. She picked up the book, stepped down the rock and went nearer the stream. Pressing the diary firmly against her heart, she turned her face aside, closed her eyes tightly and with all her might, flung her old diary into the flowing stream.

Her aunt, leaning against a tree still sleeping, startled at the sound of the splashing water, looked about her in amazement.

"Malektaj," she called, "Malektaj, where are you?"

Malektaj did not answer. Her hands folded upon her breast, she stood mutely gazing at the book riding down the current, its leaves still fluttering in the breeze.

"What was it, Malektaj? Where are you, Malektaj?"

"It is I, Aunt, it is. . . The water is carrying me away, look down there. Look, Aunt. Don't you see? There it goes. There it disappears down the river," she said.

Two big teardrops hung quivering on her eyelashes, as she murmered.

"I am gone. I am gone. Nothing is left of me in this world, nothing. . ."

BIBI DJAN, THE RUG WEAVER

Bibi Djan finished her housework and watered the flowers around the pool in the yard. As she stepped down into the kitchen to start a fire for the samovar, she heard a knock at the street door. It could not be her husband, for it was too early for him to come home from work. She climbed the kitchen steps and called, "Who is there?"—then, covering her face carefully and gathering her long veil around her waist, opened the door slightly and peeped out. Two persons were standing outside the door. They seemed like women, but they wore hats. One had beady blue eyes and blonde hair, the other had dark eyes and jet-black, curly hair.

"They must be men," she thought. She had never seen women in the street without a veil. But the strangers greeted her in soft tones and when they smiled she said to herself, "They both are women," and uncovered her face and led them into the living room.

She invited them to sit down on the carpet, as she sat cross-legged, facing them, When they had removed their hats she saw that they did not have long tresses as she had, but wore their hair combed backward and gathered up behind.

When the girl with the blue eyes began to talk, Bibi Djan listened carefully but could make out only a few Persian words.

"How old were you when you started to work in the rug factory?"

With some effort Bibi Djan caught the meaning. She thought, "How do they know I have been a rug weaver? Must I answer them? But really, how old was I when I started to work? And how old am I now? Wouldn't it be a shame if I told them I did not know my own age?"

Never before had she thought of her age. She remembered when she was a child in the dark, damp cellar of the rug factory. A row of small children like herself sat upon narrow benches before the large looms, their little hands moving with mechanical speed among the large balls of colored yarn hanging before them. The master, design in hand, read out the colors in sing-song fashion, "One green, one red. . . two blue. . . Have you got them? Now two rows of blue and then a row of red."

She could not remember her father, who died when she was a baby. Her mother died soon after Bibi Djan went into the rug factory. Thus orphaned, Bibi Djan took the few furnishings of her home—a black earthen pot, a tin samovar, a teapot, a water jug, a broken heater, a tattered quilt, an old carpet—and moved into a corner of the single room occupied by the doorkeeper of the factory. Now she had been a rug weaver for many years, under the same master. Every one in the factory liked her and she was the best rug weaver in the town.

She had always thought that she must look like the girl who sat next to her at the loom, whose upper lip was cleft and her face pockmarked. But one day a girl gave Bibi Djan a piece of mirror and for the first time in her life she saw her own image. Her eyes were big, with long black lashes and thick brows, her small white teeth glistened and her oval face was pale. She was glad that she looked pretty. But she was worried because she was very short for her age. None of the girls in the factory was taller than four feet, but Bibi Djan was the shortest of them all. "It must be my kismet," she thought.

But Habib, the man who brought the yarn to the girls' looms each day, was scarcely taller than she. All the girls seemed to like him. The time came when he fell in love with Bibi Djan. He offered her presents, which she refused at first, but soon she came to like him, and they were quietly married.

Bibi Djan was happy. Habib loved her very much. He would put his money in her hand every time he was paid, and she never had to repeat any request except one. He smoked opium and would not give it up. The smell of opium upset Bibi Djan's heart. Everything in the house, the beds, the curtains, even the clothes in the chest, smelled of opium. Sometimes he would promise to stop smoking because she thought it would be harmful to the baby who was to be born, but as soon as his smoking hour came he forgot his vow.

Seven months had now passed since their marriage. Bibi Djan sat before the two strangers, gazing at their faces, and trying to figure out her own age. When the girl with dark hair, smiling broadly, repeated the question, Bibi Djan understood her much better and replied: "*Khanum*, I think I must have been about ten or perhaps twelve years old when I first entered the factory. I pulled out my first tooth there. I remember one day when that tooth was loose I pulled it out with a string and the blood stained the rug and the master was very angry and did not pay me for that day."

The girls laughed.

"How lovely the blonde girl looks when she laughs," thought Bibi Djan.

"How long have you been married?" asked the girl with dark hair.

"Since last spring, on the first Thursday of our New Year. Perhaps it is ten or eleven months ago," said Bibi Djan, wrapping her *chadir* around her body so that the visitors could not see her shape.

"Bibi Djan," said the girl with blonde hair, "we are midwife nurses. We have a Mothers' Society here in Kerman, and we want you to join it. It will be very help-

ful to you, and we shall be glad to help you at the time when your baby is born. We give special lectures for woman rug weavers and we want you to attend them. Do you know why all the rug weavers do not get tall and have small waists and are so pale and skinny? It is because they pass their lives in the dark, damp cellars of the rug factory. Bibi Djan, you started to work when you were only five or six years of age. Now you may be sixteen or seventeen, perhaps even younger."

Bibi Djan gazed at her and could not understand her, as the girl pronounced *g* instead of *gh,* and *h* instead of *kh.*

"What is the *khanum* saying?" she asked the other girl. "You must excuse me, but I do not know what she is saying."

The Armenian nurse with the dark hair repeated, and Bibi Djan understood.

"God forbid, *khanum,* who says I am short because I have worked in the rug factory? It is my fate. *Inshallah,* may God grant me tall and healthy children."

"If you want your children to be born healthy, you should do as we say."

"Upon my eye, *khanum*, I am your maid-servant."

"Now, listen. Every Thursday you must come to our home for the meeting. And you must let us know the day you expect the baby."

"No, thank you, thank you very much. You need not bother. The doorkeeper's mother at the factory is a very good midwife. I must call her, and if I do not, she will be offended, for she has brought me up as her own child."

"No, Bibi Djan, you cannot bear your child easily. You must go to the hospital. There is a good man doctor there. You. . ."

At the word hospital, Bibi Djan's heart leaped, and she cried out. She had heard about the hospital. That was the place where those who went never came back. "No, no, I would not go to the hospital. I would never step out of this house to go to a hospital, even if you cut my head off!" she said.

The nurse went on patiently. "We have come here all the way from England to help rug weavers like you in childbirth. The services at the hospital are free. If you stay at home, the midwife may not be able to help you, and you may die."

"If my kismet is to die at childbirth, let it be so," said Bibi Djan, smiling. "Even if you gave me a sack of gold, I would not go to the hospital."

The nurses were puzzled and decided to talk about the matter to her husband, and asked for his name and the place he worked. They were ready to go, but she asked them to stay a little longer for tea. She brought a boiling samovar and served them with small glasses of tea. They admired her cleanliness and neatness. The yellow samovar sparkled like gold, the glasses were crystal-clear and the towel was white like snow, the white cloths in the niches were spotless and everything in the room was in order.

When the girls rose to go, Bibi Djan gave each a flower from the yard and they thanked her and went away.

* * * * *

Bibi Djan did not tell her husband about the visit.



"They may persuade him easily," she thought, "and he may send me to the hospital."

But she did not believe that the nurses, being women, would have the courage to talk to a man about such a matter as childbirth.

Bibi Djan wished to have a boy and she prepared everything for a boy. For charms against evil eyes she attached a blue bead to each of the baby garments and to the cradle. As days passed she kept the house in order and steadily finished her sewing and mended all of her husband's clothes and stockings. "Who knows?" she thought, "I may die at childbirth, and I do not want my successor to speak ill of me, and curse my bones."

One morning about the end of autumn when her husband had his sack upon his shoulder, ready to go to work, she asked him to send to her the doorkeeper's mother, the midwife.

"Why?" asked Habib. "Has the day come?"

She blushed and nodded. He put his sack down and sat upon the kitchen steps. "Bibi Djan," he said in a soft voice, as if speaking to a child. She had never heard him speak like that. It is true that he never flung orders and curses at her as other men do, but he had never spoken so softly. "I am going to tell you something," he went on. "Come, sit by me and listen!"

She gathered her chadir around her waist and with some effort sat down by her husband upon the kitchen steps.

"Bibi Djan," he said, "you are not going to call the doorkeeper's mother for a midwife. You must go to the hospital. The English nurses. . . "

Her blood turned to water, and her heart pounded with anger. "I must go to the hospital?" she cried. She beat her knees and cried: "Let the dust fall upon my head, my husband wants to kill me, he wants to bury me alive! Aye, aye, what shall I do? Those infidels, those daughters of dogs! When did they come and rob you of your senses? Who said you can send me to the hospital? What am I to do? What am I to do?"

Habib was puzzled. "Very well, very well, don't go to the hospital. But choke your voice! The neighbors may think Habib is beating his wife. I will call the doorkeeper's mother. I will call her. Let it be as you wish."

Bibi Djan was in labor for two days while with trembling hands the doorkeeper's mother tried everything she could do. She appealed to the prophets, and she had a Koran brought from the mosque and tied to Bibi Djan's waist. She got some fragrant herbs from the dervishes and made Bibi Djan chew them, hoping to ease her pangs. But all was in vain.

At last she became hopeless and told Habib that she could not help any further and she would not be responsible.

Habib had not left the house for these two days, but now he kicked the door open and in one breath ran to the house of the English nurses. There he found the nurse with black hair. She looked at the small man closely and recognized him. "What is it? I know, you are here about Bibi Djan. When did her labors begin?"

"Early this morning, very early," replied Habib, dropping his head.

"You say her labors started very early this morning, and you have come to call us at this late hour of sunset! Have you called any of the local midwives?"

"No, *khanum*, no. I would not permit such a blunder."

"Very well, then, wait till I get ready, and I will go with you," said the nurse.

When Habib returned with the nurse Bibi Djan was moaning and weeping. Many women and children had gathered in the yard and inside the house. The nurse glanced about until her eyes rested upon an old woman who sat in the upper corner of the room, talking to a neighbor. She recognized her at once as the local midwife, whom she had met before.

"How do you feel, Bibi Djan?" asked the Englishwoman gently.

"Aye, *khanum,* let me be your sacrifice. I have been suffering for the past two days. I don't know what evil eye struck me! My baby will not come. Some one must have cursed me. Poor Naneh Taghi did everything in her power, but she could not help me."

"No, no, I did nothing," cried the stooping old woman. "God knows I have done nothing harmful."

"Don't be afraid, Bibi Djan. Get ready. We shall take you to the hospital at once," said the nurse.

"Let Allah make me go blind!" cried Bibi Djan. "Do you think I would uncover my face in the presence of a man doctor? I would rather die here in my own house."

"Don't you go to the hospital, girl!" advised a woman neighbor, who had brought her water-pipe with her and was smoking it unceasingly. "Don't listen to them. They took the daughter of my sister-in-law to the hospital and killed her with an operating knife."

"Bibi Djan, my soul, do not refuse," pleaded Habib.

"Choke yourself, you son of a dog! I know you want me to die so you can take another wife."

The nurse tried to put the crowd out of the room, but no sooner had she chased them out of one door than they rushed back in through another door like a swarm of flies.

She went to Habib and whispered something in-

to his ears. He ran out. In a short while he returned, panting. "The carriage is ready, *khanum*." The nurse again whispered something into his ear.

"Do as you please, *khanum*," he said, "I am your sacrifice. I will kiss your feet, *khanum*. Please save Bibi Djan."

Bibi Djan, her elbows resting on the edge of a niche, was moaning and weeping. The nurse asked Bibi Djan to lie down on the bed which was spread on the floor. The old woman with the water-pipe cried out, "Let the dust fall upon my head! Don't lie down? Whoever saw a child-bearing woman lie down? What crazy notions these English midwives have in their heads!"

The nurse seized the old woman by the arm, and led her out of the room. Then with Habib's help she sent out all the other women and children and latched the doors, although they crowded at the window and tried to peer in.

At last Bibi Djan lay down and the nurse held the chloroform to her nose. When Bibi Djan was unconscious, the woman bent and lifted her gently in her arms and carried her out. Habib picked up the bundles, chased everyone out of the yard, and locked the street door.

Alone in the waiting room of the hospital, Habib paced the floor, rubbing his hands together nervously. He tried to sit down a moment, but he could not. Then he went and stood by the window.

The day was almost gone. In the garden below, the pomegranate trees bent under the burden of their cracked fruit.

But Habib saw nothing. He stood, motionless, staring. "Why did I bring her to the hospital against her will?" he thought. "If she dies, how am I to account for her on the Day of Judgment? But no, they told me she would not die. They have saved many lives."

He went and sat on a bench and pulled his knees to his chest and rested his head upon them. In his heart he made promises to God and the prophets. He pledged a part of his belongings to the poor. He vowed to go upon a pilgrimage to the holy city of Meshed.

A thousand other vows flashed through his mind, but when he felt that none of them was enough, he lifted his arms over his head and muttered: "Allah, if you spare Bibi Djan, I will give up smoking opium. I promise, and this time I will make my promise good—if only my wife lives."

At that moment the door opened and a nurse came in. Habib sprang to his feet, his fingers clutching at his heart.

"Are you the husband of the patient under operation?" asked the nurse. "Give me an ear. The doctor says you must decide quickly. Which would you want us to save—your child or your wife? We may have to sacrifice one to save the other—or else both may die."

Habib stared at the nurse, his eyes wide. A chill had suddenly fallen upon his emotions. What would he do with a motherless child? He stroked his beard and beat his forehead. How could he sacrifice his child, a part of his own flesh and blood? How could he tear out one of his eyes? But could he ever be able to find himself a wife as faithful and thrifty as Bibi Djan? How could he give a verdict against his own soul?

His head dropped and the tears rolled down his cheeks into his beard, while the nurse stood silently watching the tragedy of the little man, and waiting for an answer.

Then he lifted his head heavily and said in a quivering whisper, "Save my child!"

His knees sagged and he slumped on the bench. After a few moments he made a great effort to rise, but he could not. He wanted to run after the nurse and tell her that he had made a terrible mistake, that he had not meant what he said. But the girl in white seemed to be running across a desert, and running after her a long distance, he came to Bibi Djan. She wore a green velvet coat and her head was covered with a pink chadir. It was her wedding dress. He remembered her on their wedding day, sitting beside him in front of a large mirror. She had gazed at him in the mirror and she had smiled. Now, too, she was staring at him, but she was not smiling. She seemed to say: "Go away, Habib, I am disgusted with you. You must have smoked too much opium today." And he replied: "I will smoke no more. I vow it by your life, and by my own life. I will break my pipe to bits. You must believe me, Bibi Djan. Now let us go home. We have a long way to walk. Why don't you answer me. . . . Don't run away. Wait, dearest to my soul . . . wait!" cried Habib, and was startled to hear his own voice.

He felt the light touch of a hand on his shoulder and he opened his eyes. The room was dark. He heard a whisper in his ear: "Get up, Habib. God has given you a fine little boy. And He has saved Bibi Djan's life, too. Come and see them."

Habib rubbed his eyes and sprang to his feet, and saw the Armenian nurse standing at his side in the dark waiting room, holding in her hand a small kerosene lamp, her face beaming in its flickering light.

(Translated by P. Noorigian)

THE JEALOUS WIFE

With the help of her Negro maid, Zobayda disguised herself as a Persian gypsy. She put on a blue blouse flowered with yellow roses, a dark red skirt reaching to her knees, black satin trousers and a tight-fitting green jacket.

Tall and slender, she looked shorter in her gypsy costume. She covered her head with a large white kerchief pinned tightly under her chin, and put on a necklace and a bracelet of colorful beads. She sat down upon a cushion facing a large mirror and glanced at herself, but turned her face quickly away from the mirror. In her heart she repeated some terrible curses and aloud she muttered: "He deserves it, the unbeliever! He has not come home these three days!"

Her Negro maid brought a large box of cosmetics and took out a dark red, sticky powder and painted Zobayda's face and hands, then broadened the fine arches of her brows and dyed her eyelashes dark blue. Again Zobayda stared into the mirror. She hated her disguise, but she was satisfied with it. In the mirror her eyes looked as dark as night and full of fury. She took courage and rose and hastily picked up a bag filled with raisins and walnuts and thrust a small package in it. Then she placed two large sieves upon her shoulder, covered herself with a heavy colorful veil and stepped out of the back door.

When Zobayda found herself in the street, her heart was seized with a shiver and she said to herself: "What am I doing? If I fail to disguise my voice properly and if I am discovered, I shall have made myself ridiculous. And what am I to do if my husband really happens to be there?"

The big clock on top of the British Legation struck ten. "I must hurry," thought Zobayda. "If he stayed there last night, he must return to his clinic at eleven."

Splashing her way through the mud, her bare heels wet and cold, she came to Shah-Abas and stopped in front of a door. She put her bundles down and blew on her cold fingers. In her heart she cursed herself and all seven of her past generations. A few more curses meant for her husband came to her tongue, but she smothered them. She adjusted her costume and held an eye against a crack in the closed door. Then she cleared her throat and, holding her lips against the crack, called in a shrill gypsy tone, "*Khanum,* I have raisins, walnuts, dry mulberries! I can tell your fortune! Aye, dear *khanum*!"

She paused and listened. Then she muttered, "I shall cry my wares until that daughter of a bitch calls me in."

She began to call again, "Aye, *khanum,* I sell sieves



for sifting flour, I sell talismans for good luck!"

A maid suddenly opened the door, shouting: "What is all this? You shameless unbeliever! Why do you go around the town pestering people with your stinking mouth? Come in, my *khanum* wants you!"

Zobayda walked in, banging her sieves against the door.

"Be careful, you big mare!" cried the maid, "and don't scrape the door."

"Upon my eye," said Zobayda. "But tell me, sister, is there any stranger in the house?"

"Do not ask about things that do not concern you, fool! Follow me, and look beneath your feet," grumbled the maid, as she latched the door.

Biting her lip, her heart beating feverishly, Zobayda followed the maid through the yard and up a short flight

of stairs. By the door on top of the stairs she took off her slippers and stepped into the living room.

"Peace be with you, *khanum*," she said in a cracked voice.

The *khanum* sat by the *kursi,* her fat body expanding in the warmth, lazily smoking a water-pipe.

"Peace be with you," answered the *khanum,* after she had inhaled the smoke from her water pipe and blown it slowly out of her nostrils, while she measured Zobayda from head to foot with her large cold eyes.

Zobayda looked at the *khanum's* face, so small and plump, set over a short neck and shining with paint, and thought, "You look like one of those pictures upon the walls of a public bath house!" but she said in a soft voice, "Beautiful *khanum*, what would you wish?"

"Wait! Don't you see I am smoking? How did you wait inside your mother for nine months?"

Zobayda stood, her glance wandering around the spacious room. The doors and windows were hung with heavy dark brown curtains. Clean white cloths with embroidered edges lined the niches in the walls. In one of the niches were a pair of the *khanum's* black shoes and a pair of stockings, in another, a mirror, a ball of white silk thread and a cosmetic box with its cover ajar. Suddenly in another niche she saw a man's hat. She lowered her eyes, and below the niche she saw a cane with a silver handle, which she well knew belonged to her husband. Her knees began to shake with fear and anger. She thought she saw her husband's eyes glaring at her from behind every curtain. It seemed to her as if even the cane could recognize her.

To avoid betraying herself, she turned toward the wall and put the sieves down, and placed the bags in them.

"Why do you fumble with those sacks?" shouted the *khanum*. "No one here wants to buy raisins or mulberries. I want you to tell my fortune."

Zobayda lowered her eyes and knelt upon the rug in front of the *khanum* and said with a feigned smile: "Let me see your hand, fair *khanum*! Your moonlike face tells me that you have enemies. A beautiful lady like you must have many rivals."

The fat *khanum* smiled broadly, extending her left hand. Zobayda stroked the hand gently down to the finger tips, then turned it over in her palm, gazed at it for a moment and let it drop. Out of her pocket she took a pair of copper dice, shook them in her hand and glanced at them.

"I was correct, lovely lady," she said, "you have many enemies around you, but you take them for friends. One of them is a short, fat woman and another is a red-haired girl. The wheel of your fate is turning fast, but you do not realize it. But wait! What do I see? The wheel of your fortune is beginning to slow down!"

Casting the dice once more, Zobayda declared, "There is someone who loves you!" The *khanum* listened anxiously, her small head leaning toward Zobayda.

"Yes, and it is a gentleman with a fine complexion and large, dark eyes."

"Aye, Doctor!" the *khanum* called loudly, "did you hear what this daughter of a bitch said? Come out here and listen to what she says!"

"Let the dust fall upon my head! Why didn't you tell me there is a man in this house?" exclaimed Zobayda, pulling her veil hastily over her head.

"Don't be nervous, woman," said the *khanum*. "The gentleman is not going to eat you and, besides, he is a doctor." Then she cackled loudly, "Come out of there, Doctor, I must have your fortune told too. I will not let you get away until I learn the secrets of your heart."

Zobayda's knees shuddered as she cast the dice again: "May your enemies go blind, *khanum*, they are trying to harm you, especially the well-shaped woman with the soft eyes of a doe, the one who sings like a nightingale and is as beautiful as the moon of the fourteenth night. Beware of her! She pretends to be a friend, but she is your worst enemy."

A smile froze upon the *khanum*'s lips. She knitted her brows and called: "Doctor, do you realize now that I am not lying? Your wife is my enemy! I am sure she has been setting a trap for me."

"Choke yourself!" came the Doctor's angry voice from behind one of the heavy curtains. "My wife does not even know I call upon you."

"You men are so stupid," shouted the *khanum.* "You think she does not know! Aye, is there anything we women don't know about you men? You poor fool!"

Upon hearing her husband's voice Zobayda was seized with terror. She stood up, pulled her veil up and covered her face and went to her bundles, her face toward the wall, cursing inwardly: "This stinking woman! A leftover from a thousand men! So she is the one you chose! You worthless dog!"

Aloud she said beseechingly, *"Khanum,* will you please pay me and let me go?"

"What is your hurry, woman! Wait until the Doctor comes out and you may tell his fortune too."

"Yes, let her wait," cried the Doctor from the next room. "I shall come as soon as I put my shoes on."

But the *khanum*, inhaling smoke from her water pipe and frowning, made a sign to the maid to pay the gypsy woman and send her away.

Zobayda did not even glance at the silver coins. She

wrapped them hastily in a corner of her handkerchief and rushed out of the room.

When she was alone in the street, she let loose the sobs she had choked in her throat, and the tears streamed down her cheeks. She hurried into a ruined house at the end of the street, where behind a wall she threw the sieves aside in the mud. Then she took out of her bag the bundle of her everyday clothes and changed her costume, rolling up and tossing away the gypsy garments.

On her way home she stopped at a small store.

"*Agha*, let me have sixteen grains of opium," she said, covering her face carefully. The merchant stared at her with sharp eyes and twirled his mustache.

"Hurry, *agha,* I have much to do," she said, thrusting a piece of silver into his hand. As he took it he patted her soft hand with his fingertips. She pulled her hand back angrily.

"*Khanum,*" he said, "this does not look like the hand of a maid. Please uncover your lovely face and let me see it."

Zobayda swung her arm and slapped the man's face. "Oh, *khanum*," he cried, "that was good! Let me have one more, my soul, one more," and turned his other cheek. She spat upon the ground and went away, without even taking her money back, saying in her heart: "Men are worse than street dogs! Fools!" Why were people moving back and forth in the street, chattering carelessly or laughing or even singing? "Why do they buy food instead of opium?" she thought. "My grandmother took opium and put an end to her miserable life. She was the wisest woman I ever knew."

At length, with some difficulty, she bought sixteen grains of opium. Holding it tightly in her hand, wrapped in a piece of paper, she mechanically began to walk toward home.

Khadijeh, her Negro maid, was squatting outside the door, waiting for her. The maid undressed her and washed the paint off her face, as her mistress sat motionless.

"Poor Khadijeh," thought Zobayda, "you do not know that this will be the last time you will have to undress me and wash my face." She rose to her feet and put on a small black coat and covered herself with a pink silk *chodor.* "Listen, Khadijeh," she said, "I don't want to be disturbed today. Even if the Doctor comes tell him I am not in. Now bring me a glass of water, quickly."

With the glass of water in her hand she entered her husband's office and locked the door behind her. The office windows opened upon a garden with a pool in the middle, fringed with flowering plants and fruit trees and weeping willows.

"This is a bad omen," said the maid to herself. "I never saw my *khanum* in such a joyless mood, she who always sang like a nightingale. She is white like chalk and her eyes are red and swollen. I wish the day had never come when the Doctor with his evil step entered this house!"

She wrapped herself in her veil and sat down before the locked door, her legs folded under her. She said, "I shall stay at this door until this evil hour blows away."

Inside Zobayda drew the cutains at the window and door. Then she went to her husband's desk and rummaged the papers and books lying upon it. She took up some of the papers, without even glancing at them, and tore them up and threw the pieces into the waste basket. She tore the covers off the books, and then she took all the papers out of the drawers one by one and scattered them on the floor.

Outside the door Khadijeh thought, "It is good, she is at least clearing her husband's desk." She stood up and peered through a crack in the door. Through that crack she had often watched the Doctor with his patients. "Curses be upon you, evil Satan, she has even drawn the door curtains," she said to herself, and sat back, her ear close to the door.

In one of the desk drawers Zobayda discovered a small box. "These must be her letters," she thought. She flung the box to the floor and broke it open under her foot. Out fell a package of letters tied with pink ribbon, which she cut with her teeth. She scattered the letters all over the room. A small picture flew out of the packet and landed on the green blotter upon the desk. "Now the culprit need not think that I know nothing about his affair," she thought. She threw herself in the chair and closed her eyes.

The odor of the opium in her pocket rose into her nostrils and brought her to her senses. When she opened her eyes she saw the picture lying upon the green desk blotter. The smiling face was her own. She laughed bitterly, "No! This is not my picture! This is the happy Zobayda of the past." She tore it up and threw the pieces in the waste basket. Now she took the opium out of her pocket and held it in her hand. "But no, not yet," she said to herself, and placed the opium on the desk beside the glass of water. "People must not think I went mad and killed myself. I must write a letter first." She took a sheet of paper and began to write. Her thoughts flowed so fast that her pen could not keep pace with them.

"Sefieh, do you wish to hear the story of my life? I shall tell it to you. When you read this letter, leaning against soft cushions, side by side with the Doctor, rejoice, for there will be no more Zobayda. But I beg one thing of you. Do not dare to attend my funeral. If

you do, I would curse you even from the grave . . . You know well that the feverish season of my youth was already over when I married the Doctor two years ago. You became intimate with me soon after we first met, because you loved my husband."

Tears began to drip upon the letter; she wiped her eyes with her sleeve and wrote on.

"I was the spoiled child of a rich family, the only daughter of my parents. Even my smallest wish was promptly done. When I sat down for dinner, the Negro maids of my mother were all at my service. They were like toys in my hands. One of them played a tambourine for me, another danced, a third placed the choicest morsels of food in my mouth, while a fourth stood at the door, waiting upon my whim. I lacked nothing in the world. But when I became of age, I was disgusted with that sort of life. I would not obey anyone. I looked upon everything as my own. Like a bird in my cage I only ate and sang. But I had a strong desire for freedom. And I decided to get out of that prison, because I was not born for a harem. I did get out. I devoted my life to singing, the art I loved. My parents and relatives considered me dead, but I did not care, for I was free and happy.

"My garden seemed a real paradise to me. My servants moved about me busy as ants, and my maid Khadijeh followed me like my own shadow. . ." ("Oh, my poor Khadijeh," thought Zobayda, "I wonder if your old age will be able to bear the grief.")

"I did not want to get married. I hated all men. During the long winter nights when Tehran was covered with a thick blanket of snow, and the breath froze upon men's beards, many men came to my door. They all loved to hear me sing. My visitors fell upon their knees begging for a glance of love from me, but my heart was hard as stone and my spirit soared high in the air.

"And why do I write you all these details? But have patience, Sefieh! I want to enjoy once more, and for the last time, the memory of the irrevocable joy of my past.

"Now what did I write down?" asked Zobayda to herself. Knitting her brows, she read the word she had just written—"Irrevocable. . ." "But why?" She felt within her the sudden rise of a dim hope, which she tried to ignore.

"I enjoyed my freedom and happiness for years. Then came a cool spring night—Oh, why did not the world come to an end that night? A pale moon lighted my porch and the fragrance of honeysuckle was spread over the garden. Half dressed, leaning against soft cushions, I watched the moon. I loved to feel the caress of moonlight on my skin. I would not let any visitors come that night. And later I slept all through the spring night, half-naked, without any covering. The following day I was stricken with pneumonia.

"Then the Doctor came and saved my life, he who was later to rob me of everything I valued. My soul was weak within my frail body. With the magnetism of his eyes he conquered me. He knew well that I was a virgin in soul as well as in body. I could not understand how he could forsake the house he had built and give up his wife and children to devote himself to me. But I believed him."

Zobayda's heart beat faster, but she held the pen firmly and went on writing:

"So I do not blame you, Sefieh. I think of the sufferings you must go through. Whoever loves him is compelled by some power. But when you too are discarded, and when you suffer, remember me. . ."

Within her suddenly she felt the sagging of her will. She could not hate her husband. It was all my own fault, she thought. She saw before her eyes the lewd face of Sefieh, and thought she heard the sickening sound of her shrill laughter. She dropped the pen and jumped to her feet and nervously paced the floor. . . "He will come back!" she thought, "I am sure he will come back. It is Sefieh who must suffer!"

She went to the window and looked out. The rain had ceased and a spring sun spread its bright mantle over the pool where small goldfish played and gleamed. A powerful passion for life gripped her heart, slowly, firmly.

She saw the gardener pruning rosebushes with his great shears. She saw a sparrow with a worm in his beak on the edge of a nest in the wall.

The warm sun streamed over her cold hands. Among the green bushes in the garden below violets bloomed. The air was teeming with life and fragrant with the breath of spring.

From the depths of her heart a voice spoke: "He may come back. He may not. But you must live, if only for your music, and you will be happy as you were before."

She recalled her favorite song and began to sing it softly:

My eyes are wet, and in my breast
There is a furnace full of fire,
My cup of pleasure brims again
With Blood from out of my beating heart.

She smiled. It seemed to her as if many years had passed since the last time she had smiled, many, many years.

(Translated by P. Noorigian)

An Armenian Knight's Entertainments

By Maurice Hewlett

Let him add a few lines more in regard to the common people of England: Suppose a foreigner (or, as they would call him, an outlandishman), whether a Turk or a Jew, should come amongst them, and chance to be affronted by any of their dear countrymen in the street; if he should be spirited enough to return the blow, they would be pleased, crying out, "Well done, and fair play!" If the foreigner should happen to knock down, which God forbid, the Englishman, and should not keep him under, they would say, "Let him get up again!" preserving justice all the while till the end of the battle; whereas in all other foreign countries which the author has observed in his travels, if such an affray should happen, the Lord have mercy upon the poor wretch who should affront any one of the natives; the whole multitude would rise to crush him under their feet, as if he were guilty of murder.



That very handsome observation was made in 1788 by a man who had reason to know what he was talking about. He was Joseph Emin, or Ameen, a stray Armenian, who had drifted from Bagdad into India under stress of persecution, thence into our port of London,

which turned out to be a prosperous haven for him. God, Who has an eye for the fall of sparrows, kept also within His providence this waif from the Levant, as much of a sparrow himself as any man can well be: bold, assured, tenacious; cheerful in adversity, giving as good as he got; and after hardships gallantly borne, dropping into everything he desired, so far as we could give it him—all this is true of Emin, as it is true of most sparrows. Working his way out from Calcutta before the mast, at something like nineteen years old; landed at Woolwich without a friend or a sixpence; a porter, a bricklayer's laborer, an errand boy, a copying clerk; starving more often than not, without a shirt to his back, he became the friend and client of celebrated persons, the hero of fashionable ladies, a reputed millionaire (on a hundred a year); hobnobbed with Frederick the Great, was patronized by Catherine of Russia; advised the Prince of Georgia for his good, levied war on the Shah of Persia, and, after all that, married, wrote his memoirs in a gigantic volume, and died in his bed.

You may call him, not intending any offence to his memory, an amiable parasite. He was undoubtedly both. Not all parasites are noxious, not all prey upon their kind. Emin was not rapacious. He attached himself to mankind, because other men had things which he lacked. But he neither levied nor begged. He stated his needs, and they were supplied. He was a friendly as well as a bold creature. His method with all classes and both sexes was the same. He said exactly what he wanted, and left it to you. But he was a man of courage, a man of his hands. On his voyage out from Calcutta, a runaway of nineteen, he knocked a seaman down who had abused him, "with a single slap on the left side of the face"—which, slap or not, according to his own account was a knockout. Before that, at a still earlier age, he had rescued his grandfather from imprisonment in Ispahan at the hands of a predatory Beg, by going to the palace and asking for an interview with the Shah. Direct action was always the line he took with kings. He interested some court official in his tale, and the interview was actually arranged. Then arrived the Beg and his prisoner, appealing on their knees against further proceedings. "The officer then said to Emin, 'Go my brave boy, serve your old grandfather and obtain his blessing. I see in your countenance that one day you will become a great man. Then remember what I have told you.' " I think Emin had the makings of a great man, of a kind, though not of the kind which he aimed to be.

After he had been in London for a year or more, mostly starving, and growing, no doubt, seedier and seedier as he went on, walking one afternoon in St. James's Park, he saw there a Mr. Bodley, a lawyer of the Calcutta Bar whom he knew by sight. Did he accost Mr. Bodley for news of his father? He did not. But Mr. Bodley was accompanied by another person, "very tall and well made, a stranger to the author"; and after the author had followed the pair up and down the Mall three or four times, it was "Mr. Bodley's noble-looking companion" that he presently saluted.

Accosting him, he told him that he knew that person. The stranger, truly affable, asked him to give the person's name. "Mr. Bodley," says Emin. Asked then why, if he knew his name, he had not rather adventured him than another, Emin said, with great address, that Mr. Bodley "had been so many years in the East, breathing the air of that quarter, he feared some rebuking word from him." Such a way of putting it at once touched and flattered the stranger. Emin, shabby as he may have been, was presented to Mr. Bodley and invited to walk with him and his friend. He heard news of his father, was pressed for an account of himself, and perceiving that "the noble stranger" was interested "thought it proper to open to him the wounds of his heart." What these were he does not tell us. They may have been the desolations of his countrymen, then as now the victims of Turkish massacre; but if he then had any ambition to become the Liberator of Armenia, he does not say so.

Mr. Bodley presently going home, his "noble companion" invited Emin to his lodging, which was "up two pair of stairs, at the sign of the Pope's Head, at a bookseller's shop near the Temple." The conversation was renewed; Emin had plenty to tell, was sympathetically heard; then begged the name of a gentleman who treated him with so much courtesy.

He very politely answered, "Sir, my name is Edmund Burke, at your service; I am a runaway son from a father, as you are." He then took half a guinea out of his pocket, presented it to Emin, and said, "Upon my honour this is what I have at present, please to accept it." Emin thanked him, took three guineas and a half out of his own pocket, and said, "I am worth so much; it will not be honest to accept of that; not because it is a small sum; if it were a thousand pounds I would not. I am not come away from my friends to get money; but if you will continue your kind notice towards me, that is all I want; and I shall value it more than a prince's treasure."

That was well said, and perfectly true. Emin wanted many things of his friends and patrons, but money was perhaps the last thing that he wanted. He had it, took it, and spent it—but by no means on himself. Burke and

his kinsman, William Burke in India, proved long and good friends. At the moment the statesman was invaluable. He "always advised him to put his trust in God," and give him writings to copy. "The first was an Imitation of the late Lord Bolingbroke's Letter; the second, the Treatise of Sublime and Beautiful."

His next acquaintance came by just such another fortunate chance. Walking up Cheapside, he saw an Oriental and accosted him in Turkish. "He found him to be an Armenian; both parties were glad to see each other." This man's name was Asataim; he was a groom, sent over from Aleppo with an Arab horse for the Duke of Northumberland. He had himself no English and was at his wits' ends for an interpreter. Emin seemed the very man—and was so. They returned to Northumberland House, where Emin stood interpreter between Asataim and the servants, "more particularly his grace's gentleman, Mr. Bale." His Grace came by these means to hear of Emin, and sent Mr. Bale for him.

He (Emin) said, "Let me go back to put on a clean shirt and a more decent coat." Mr. Bale said, "My lord will know a man without fine cloths." Emin consented, called God in his heart to his assistance, and entered the library where the duke was standing by the side of the table. After making his bow and paying respects due to his greatness, the duke said to him, "The Armenian groom Asataim does not understand English, nor is he, with his broken lingua franca, *able to make us understand him. We are at a loss to explain to him the different marks of horses. Have you seen the chestnut-colored Arab that he has brought over?" "Yes, my lord." "Pray, Mr. Emin, what do you think of it? Is it a true one?" "Yes, my lord," said Emin, "if your lordship will give me a commission, I give you my word I can procure a better."*

The Duke stopped him there with an abrupt "Pray, sir, where is your father?"

"In Bengal, my lord."

"What is your reason for chusing to go to Aleppo?" Emin thereupon told a fib, saying that India didn't agree with him.

It was clever of the Duke to see that Emin was neither going to Aleppo for the sake of the commission on a horse deal nor for his health. He was not: he tells us himself in a parenthesis that he wished to use that port as a jumping-off ground for the mountains of Armenia where, owing to the death of Nadir Shah, as he understood, "people were stirring pretty briskly." It is the first hint he gives us of what he was driving at. The Duke

Three Poets

(in the style of the poets)

By Diana Der Hovanessian

Varoujan

The great Armenian epic,
that's what I was working on.
And when I would read segments
to my students, their eyes would fill
with the deep secrets of their past.
It was like owning a huge gem
we alone knew about. I polished it
in a secret room. When the Turks
hauled me out in April, to my death,
they found the stone, still rough,
and tossed it into the great fire.

Siamanto

My greatest rhythms rolled out
when I spoke, resurrecting my people's
hopes. I told them to build muscle
and break ropes. And when I wrote
I heard Narek 's breath in my poems.
Narek set the pace. For centuries
no one else. Yet so many children
do not claim their inheritance,
forbidden to learn their letters;
some wear poems like talismans, waiting
to learn. I praise the words
that link us stronger than chains.

Tekeyan

Older than one, the same age as the other,
I outlived both only because
I was in Jerusalem when the great crime came.
Brothers, I write every day now
honing, honing, I rewrite and reshape.
Poems have become my wife and children.
Editorials are my letters home
but to no address that I own. I write out
the burden of having lived
the terrible burden of having survived.



dropped the "horse story," as he called it, and asked Emin pointblank to declare himself.

"Pray, Mr. Emin, conceal nothing from me. Tell me the truth, for I see there is some extraordinary thing in your mind. Conceal nothing from me; I will, upon my honour, stand your friend." Emin talked to him till one in the morning of the various misfortunes of his life, the hardships he had been through, and the adversity which still awaited him in the cause of his country. It affected his lordship so, that he could not refrain from shedding tears. To show the feelings of the human mind, he is now no more, to the great grief of Emin's bleeding heart.

I wish I had space for the memorial which, at the Duke's request, Emin drew up for his consideration. It does him great credit, and carries in its simple but romantic phraseology the conviction of its truth. He said that he came of a family of warriors: "As long as I can remember my own family. . . they have always been soldiers, and always did remember Christ. Tho' they were torn out of their country of Armenia by Shah Abbas and planted in Hamadan, after their captivity they were soldiers still." Then, when his father brought him fugitive to Calcutta—"there I saw the forts of the Europeans and the soldiers' exercise. . . and that they were dextrous and perfect in all things, then I grieved with myself, for my religion and my country, that we were in slavery and ignorance like Jews, vagabonds upon earth." He was, we see, an Oriental, one of few, impressed with Western method, order and discipline. "I resolved I wou'd go to Europe to learn art military and other sciences to assist that art; and I was sure that if I would go into Armenia like an European officer I may be useful at least in some degree to my country; but my father did not listen to me, for God did not give him understanding in these things." He relates his escape on the *Walpole* and his subsequent misfortunes; then puts forward his proposals. His father, he said, was well off, and could keep him very easily while he was studying arms, if he could once be assured that the runaway was serious.

If Governor Davis writes that I have a Great Man here as my protector, my father, who looks upon me as a person run away and forsaken, will make me an allowance to learn. If I could clear my own eyes and serve my country and my religion that is trodden under foot of Mussulman, I would go thro' all slavery and danger with a glad heart; but if I must return after four years' slavery and misery to the same ignorance without doing any good would

break my heart, My Lord, in the end.

Much more to that effect: but it is a good and touching letter, by whose means the sparrow did indeed find him a nest. For the Duke of Northumberland became so far the "Great Man his Protector" as to win him the patronage of a greater—the Duke of Cumberland; to find him in certain funds, and to stand for that reputed bottomless English purse which served Emin even better than ready money. Introductions, too, he had: dukes and their duchesses, earls and their countesses; Lady Anson, Lady Sophia Egerton, Lord Cathcart, Lord Lyttelton; best of all, the famous Mrs. Montagu, to whom his finest letters are addressed. He adopted her as his queen, declared himself her "Persian slave," laid on his *rahat lakhoum* with a butter knife, and never hesitated to ask for what he wanted. "Then if you can make any interest for me to the Duke of Marlborough by Mr. Medows who is my friend and knows his Grace very well, to procure me a commission of leutenantcy in the Royal Regiment of Artillery of Woolwich it will be much better for me for then I can go the the King of Prussia at my own charge by the leave of my general, and I will have no more waiting at Great Peoples Door from 8 in the morning to four or 5 in the Afternoon, at last hardly any admitance." Very much better for him, no doubt. And he had it. One or other of his new friends procured him, through the Duke of Cumberland, the entry at Woolwich, "a blue uniform and a guinea a month pocket money." Then the Duke went his way to the wars on the Elbe, and forgot Emin. But he did not know his man. Emin scraped up the money and went after him. He edged himself into the levee, was seen and recognized. "I know you had no money," said the Duke, "how then did you manage it?" He who gave Emin an opening gave him all that he wanted.

Emin said, "May it please your Royal Highness, while your humble servant was not known to you, he was in a state of misery; but since he has been honoured by your protection his heart feels an increase in the riches of happiness. Should he in your absence be dashed on the hardest rocks, he is sure milk and honey will flow from them under your auspices. He was assisted; and he hopes he shall never be in want of money, but that his conduct will gain him the good opinion of the world, and maintain the good-will of his magnanimous royal protector, whom Heaven preserve."

That is pretty stiff, as we say; but Emin calls it a "short Oriental speech." It had its effect. A Major Freytag was sent for, and

no sooner was the officer come in than the glorious Duke took Emin the porter's hand, and putting it into Major Freytag's, said these very words, "I am somehow doubtful of this man's courage. As he is so desirous of seeing service, I charge thee to be very strict, putting him in the front of every action, and bringing me word how he behaves himself." Then turning to Emin, he said, "Go with him; let me hear a good character of thee." Here Emin's heart broke the chain of slavery, and jumped for joy, forgetting all his former distresses; when he, who was but a weak sheep before, became a loose, unfearing lion.

We must take this looseness for granted, for beyond assuring us of his patron's approval earned "by his wild rapidity in a whole campaign, in eighteen different skirmishes, and at the battle of Hastenback," he leaves us in the dark as to why it was he was given only twenty ducats at the end of it all, sent back to London, and again forgotten by the Duke. No matter: he had several strings to his bow, and in anticipating some such fatality had written "To all the ladies and patronesses of Joseph Emin" a letter of candid statement of his further desires and expectations:

I was in great hope of seeing a campaign under the King of Prussia after this, but I find I must give over that hope, for it is impossible for me to do it with less than hundred and fifty pounds for year, let me live ever so near; for which money I shall never trouble your goodness, not bend any more my neck to the Greatest Prince in the Universe.

He had it though! I don't know that Mrs. Montagu believed everything he told her. She did not, for instance, "hope to see him on the Persian throne, or giving laws to the East." But she believed a great deal. "I know," she went on, "that he sat on the summit of human virtue." Wherever he sat, he sat tight. The King of Prussia was his immediate objective; he had to wait a year or two to attain that; but he attained it, and writes very amusingly as well as disarmingly of the great man, an account which escaped the careful eye of Carlyle. As usual, Emin had worked his oracles to good purpose. The wife of Northumberland helped him to The Hague; Lady Anson gave him a letter to General Yorke; General Yorke gave him one to a Mr. Mitchell (afterwards Sir Andrew, K.C.B.), who was the British Ambassador at Berlin, and on the point of joining the King. Emin, he, and a courier set out in a wagon.

One morning, two hours before sunrise, we met the King on horseback at the head of his army on the march; who no sooner saw the wagon with two

persons in it than he asked Mr. Montagu in French, who was the second person with the courier. The ambassador said to the author, "His majesty asks who you are." Emin answered, "I am a man." "What sort of man?" said he. "What is your name?" "My name," he replied, "is Emin. I am an Armenian." Then the King said, "Is he the man the Duke of Cumberland patronises?" Being answered in the affirmative, "Ask him," said the King, "if he does not know my orders that a volunteer is not to be admitted into my army?" He said to Mr. Mitchell, "Yes; but he asks his Majesty when he graciously considers how many months (sic) *by sea and land he was come to spill his blood in his most glorious majesty's service under the hooves of his horse, he would have no objection to the boldness of the liberty taken." His Majesty said,* "Ma foi, c'est un brave garcon, je souhaite, qu'il y fut dix milles hommes de la meme disposition que lui."

Emin's equipage particularly pleased the King. It weighed eight pounds and consisted in half a dozen shirts and a pair of boots. He was bidden to mount the ambassador's horse, and, if we are to believe him, rode *tête à tête* with the lion of Europe for some nine hours, and so on for three days or more. It was as hopeful as it could be. Frederick took to him, and believed in him, relaxed his rule; ordered him an allowance of a ducat a day, three horses, a servant, kitchen furniture. And then —it was hard—Mr.Mitchell, the English Ambassador, having reported all that, added to it on his own account, that Emin was nevertheless to leave immediately he had dined, return to the army of Prince Ferdinand in Hanover, and stay there. Emin was cut to the heart, but obeyed. His description of Frederick is so good that I must afford it here:

I will do my endeavour to describe the King of Prussia's person and his way of living. He is no taller than Emin the Persian, he has a short neck, he has one of the finest made heads ever I saw in my life, with a noble forehead; he wears a false wigg, he has very handsome nose. His eyes are grey, sharp and lively, ready to pearce one through and through. He likes a man that looks him in the face when he is talking to him. He is well made everywhere, with a bend back, not stooped at all, like many Europeans. His voice is the sweetest and clearest I ever heard. He takes a great quantity of Spanish snuff, from his nose down to the buckles of his shoes or boots is all painted with that confounded stuff. His hands are as red as paint, as if he was a painter, grizy (sic) *all over. . . . All the satisfaction that I have, which is great enough, that I have seen Caesar alive, nay twenty times greater, he is more like King Solomon, for he rules his nation by wisdom and understanding. . . .*

That was in a letter to his "Magnanimous Queen of the East, Glory of the World," Mrs. Montagu, to whom, after a fruitless campaign in Westphalia, he presently returned, ready now for his main adventure and more assistance. Once more, he collected funds from his friends—the Duke of Northumberland one hundred pounds a year for three years. Mrs. Montagu twenty guineas, Lord Lyttelton ten guineas—and with some of that in hand, and the rest on paper, he wrote a letter "To the most splendid, most Christian King Heraclius of Georgia and Armenia," announcing himself as ready and able to enter into his service, and to carry with him "men skilful in all things (if you give me encouragement) to strengthen and polish your kingdom, like the kingdoms of Europe." That was a liberal offer, of which, however, King Heraclius, probably thinking that the less his kingdom was polished the more likely it was to put up with himself, took no notice whatever.

It took more than mere inattention to quench Emin. He went out to Armenia, via Italy and Alexandretta, reached Erzeroum, and wrote again to Heraclius, whom he now discovered to be, not king, but Prince of Georgia, with a father, the titular king, alive and in Russia. He addressed it, therefore, "To his high Mightiness Prince Heraclius of Georgia, whom God reserve," and called attention to the dangers which he had successfully encountered, in spite of the great discouragement his Highness's silence had caused him. He then reported, with, I must certainly think, a want of tact,

part of an instruction from my father in Bengal. . . He says that upon condition you will be graciously pleased to confer upon me the most singular honour of thinking me worthy to be made, by the order of the Church of God, your Highness' son-in-law, and will grant a certificate, signed and sealed by your Highness, and attested by two bishops or priests, he orders me to repair to your court; but if you consent not to this condition, he, my father Hoosep, has charged me not to venture entering your territories.

I doubt whether, out of a fairy tale, a young man with one hundred pounds a year for three years (which was the Duke of Northumberland's benefaction) has ever sent such a letter to a reigning prince before—for Heraclius was, in fact, reigning though his father Tahmurus was alive. The Archbishop of Tiflis, however, promised to deliver it, and may have done so. If he did, it is not wonderful that Emin had no better luck with it

than with its forerunner; but that did not prevent him from enjoying himself greatly.

Emin came hither—(Aleppo)—set out in the depth of winter, went to Armenia, and came back again like a comet, but did no damage in the world; for finding the Armenians equally few in numbers and reduced thoroughly to slavery, he resolved to go among the Turcoman clans, wild mountaineers about Antioch and Scanderoon, and harangue them into a design to take possession of this city of Aleppo, and then proceed upon farther exploits.

Such is the account of a Dr. Patrick Russell to the Turkey Merchants Company. "With immense difficulty and many expostulations," he was dissuaded, and sent back to England. "If he had not hearkened to us, the consequence of his enterprise would unavoidably have been fatal to all the Christian subjects in the Ottoman Empire." Not a doubt of it, of course. It was very well for Mrs. Montagu and the Duke of Northumberland to exalt a comic-opera hero; but Dr. Russell knew what he was doing. Emin was a case for Alexandre Dumas, but not for Christian traders in Turkey, just then.

He was back in England in 1761, and "stayed in London about eight months, very busy all the time to find ways and means for going to Petersburg." Needless to say he found both. Lord Bath gave him a letter to our ambassador, Mr. Jonas Hanway procured him a passport from Prince Galitzin; the Duke's benefaction was continued. He wrote his *adieux* in a hurry to "the Queen of the Universe," begged her to write to her "distracted slave," and off he went. In Petersburg he contrived to see and to interest Tahmurus, father of Hercalius, and so-called King of Georgia, in so far as a needy and seedy exile living on Russian charity could be interested in anything but money. The legend which accompanied Emin, that he was backed by the Duke of Northumberland with a cool million, no doubt assisted. But Tahmurus, who had broken with his son and heir, not only could not help towards in introduction, but also very promptly died. At the same time died the Empress Elizabeth; so Emin, as he says, "was left again fatherless and motherless"—which is not very kind to Mrs. Montagu and the Duke.



But a man like Emin took fathers and mothers in his stride, and found a new father in Count Worontzoff and the inklings of a mother in the Duchess of Holstein, who was to become Catherine the Great. With a letter from Worontzoff to the coy Hereclius he set off in mid-winter again for Moscow and Astrakhan; and there at last he found his man to make or mar the foolish fates, as might be.

He was to mar them. Greek had met Greek this time. Heraclius was a jaded and cunning Oriental, with no illusions left about his country or himself, too tired to have any at command for anybody else. Nevertheless, a million is a million (the legend had preceded Emin), and he was all smiles until he ascertained—from Emin himself, who concealed nothing—that the hero was unprovided with anything more substantial than unlimited brass, the heart of a lion, and one hundred pounds a year. That learned, Heraclius saw but one thing to do—by all means or any means to get rid of Emin. It was nothing like so easy as it sounded. Emin sat tight, plotted with Armenians on all hands, embroiled himself with the Persians, and made things most uncomfortable for Heraclius. Imprisonment did little; Emin went under for a time; but ladies—"Armenian angels" and what not—generally rescued him; and he bobbed up somewhere at the head of 1200 Turcomans. I don't suppose any man in Europe before or since his time made a hundred a year go as far as Emin did. However, there is an end to all things, and Heraclius did at last shake off his succubus. Emin wandered leisurely back to Bengal, picking up a wife and begetting a son or sons upon the way. There, finally, he sat down to write the Memoirs from which my extracts are taken. How true they may be I have no means of knowing, but if they are as true as they are voluminous they must be gospel. I have seldom handled a more immense book of *Memoirs.* You could lay them for a foundation stone, or begin to build a bridge with them. But vastly entertaining. Very little happened: Emin did nothing but amuse himself at other people's expense—but that he should have done any of it and survived it is exceedingly much.



Mrs. Ramos Mejia

The Barefoot Armenian

By Alice Ezegelyan

"I made the barefoot Armenians known to the Argentines."

When the flotsam from the massacres arrived in the twenties, Aimée Shahbaronian was already a known figure in international ballet, under the name of Aimée Abraamova. She had danced in the Colón Theatre and had been presented to the Prince of Wales. Then she met Federico Ramos Mejía (there is a town of Ramos Mejía, near the capital, also a large hospital named after her father-in-law) whom she married. They were devoted companions for thirty-five years. Now a widow, she is alone, all alone, like a monument, in her own words "100 years old," still invited to Armenian happenings, where she will have the last word, the monument that speaks. . .

And she has much to say, endless anecdotes to recount, apart from her own opinions and conclusions. But she hasn't much time left. She is acutely conscious of the passing of the days. She says she will soon be on another planet. She does not want to be forgotten, nor does she want all she did to disappear with her. She is reconciled—intellectually—to physical disintegration, but not to spiritual oblivion. She hates the word "death."

Who was she? How did she become what she became?

"They say I am a phenomenon. . ."

"I am scandalously sincere. I could use all the gimmicks of self-promotion, but I don't need them. My life was of itself tremendously interesting."

"I am not modest. I don't believe in modesty. Modesty is a means to cover up mediocrity."

Despite her many years, her accidents (the last not long ago, when her leg was in a cast for six months), she carries herself like a queen. She is always dressed lavishly, with make-up, a faint wake of perfume, hair done, jewels, a hat when she goes out.

"Politically, I have no color. I am the color of Armenia."

She speaks now in Armenian, now in Spanish, shifts to French, then to English, all with equal fluency and excellent pronunciation. She doesn't consider her knowledge of many languages an accomplishment, but a commodity "to communicate with the world."

"When I was born, we spoke Russian, and I had a German nurse. We had, like all well-to-do families in Tiflis, Tartar servants. They were born, married, and died in the family for generations. My aunt married an Armenian intellectual. Hovhannes Toumanian came to our home when I was a child. I knew Shant when I was five. That is when I learned to write Armenian letters.

"I come from a race of heroes and idealists. My roots are Armenian."

"When did you start dancing?"

"All Armenian girls in the Caucasus can sing and dance. My debut happened when I was taken to a big Christmas party, when I was five. There was a huge ballroom. I broke away from my aunt, and danced a *lezinga* all by myself around the ballroom. Everyone looked on and clapped. Then my bloomers fell, and someone carried me away. I cried and shrieked from rage and shame."

Parts of her early life she does not want to remember. Her father had been a rich industrialist, an idealist ("I inherited my Quixotism from him"), who had a beautiful voice and sang the Armenian church songs, the "Sharakan." He was an officer and had once with a handful of men stopped the Turks from invading the Caucasus. The Czar had decorated him. There is a photograph of him wearing his medals. There were five children. A brother and a sister were killed in the turmoil of the Revolution. Her father and mother were driven to Siberia. Eventually her father returned; her mother died on the way. They never knew where she was buried. She has two brothers in the States, who have dramatic stories of their own, having been actively involved in two wars. She hates wars vehemently, but she does not believe in fanatical patriotism.

Before World War I, when she was a young girl, she had been sent to Italy to learn singing. She was there when the holocaust came, and she had to fend for herself. She learned classical dancing. She joined the Russian Ballet. When Resphighi saw her perform, he said: "Let's make a ballet where she can dance and sing," and created the "Ballet Persan" for her, where she sang an Armenian song and danced. She shows me the program, with her picture. She went to Paris, danced, sang, traveled with the troupe.

She brings a mound of clippings, brochures, letters from celebrities, photographs, programs. . . which cover up most of the sofa. The sweet face, all innocence, of Aimée Abraamova smiles from a photograph. In others, a sensuous full mouth, slightly aquiline nose, large dark eyes are part of her suggestive beauty. She is clad in tutus, Oriental costumes, flowing Isadora tunics.

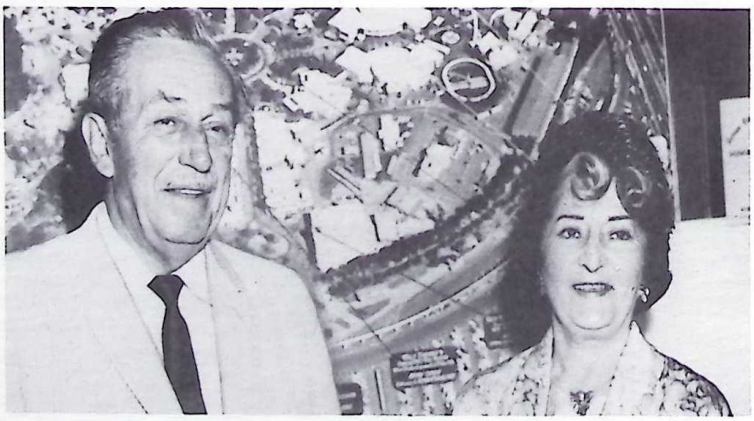
"Whatever I have accomplished has been from my own efforts. No one has helped me. People reach their



Wedding Picture 1885
Hovhaness & Iskouhi Eleozanian



Mrs. Mejia with Pres. Aramburu (assasinated), introducing the head of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice Monsignor Dolonjanian (1937)



Mrs. Mejia with Walt Disney (1966)



With Fredrick March & Martha Scott in Hollywood



Exhibition of her Paintings

goals with money. I reached mine through my talents. Maybe some fairy godmothers met at my cradle. People who respect money cannot understand it."

She married into Argentine society. She stopped dancing. She became a writer, representing Armenians and womanhood in general.

"When a door has been closed, I open another."

She also took up painting. She says, "There is an unquestionable and surprising unity in the apparent diversity of artistic expression. That is how an authentic artist can be at the same time an actor, sculptor, dancer, painter or writer."

About the Armenians, she has much to say: "When the Armenians first came here, they were immigrants, they were poor, but they had all the traditional, sterling qualities and virtues of the race. They were admirable. With the years, they became well-to-do. They sent their children to the universities. Unfortunately, some of them acquired the vices of the people they mingled with. They became interested mainly in amassing fortunes. With exceptions, they lost their Armenianness, which was a great pity. However, there are a few shining examples of great benefactors." (She mentions Dikran Murekian.)

"Politically, I have no color. I am the color of Armenia."

"Now when people become suddenly very Armenian, because it is fashionable to do so, it makes me sick.

"I've spent my life making Armenian culture known to the world."

She gave lectures, and wrote many articles in *La Nacion, La Prensa* (the two great dailies), and other publications. She had a program on Radio Nacional. She published a book, *Inquietud en la Ruta* (1947), with interesting comments about some of the famous people she knew and her impressions of many places she had visited. She traveled a great deal, mingling with celebrities, lecturing, interviewing, at a time when a woman Argentine journalist was an oddity. She has an unending, though recurring repertoire of anecdotes. She was invited by Eleanor Roosevelt to have lunch at the White House, together with Eve Curie. She speaks with familiarity of Hollywood, and of Walt Disney and Rouben Mamoulian as "my friends." She knew William Saroyan, Lin Yutang, Maurice Maeterlinck. . . and of course she knew the important people in ballet. She had an "outre-tombe" message from Diaghileff for Serge Lifar. In 1946 she went to Stuttgart to save displaced Armenians. She was invited to see Adenauer and General De Gaulle (she shows me the letters and photographs).

"You see? In almost all of the photographs I am surrounded by men. Women didn't like it."

She knew many of the Argentine presidents personally.

A letter falls out from the heap on the sofa. It's from General Lonardi, the man who organized the action against Perón, and ended, in September 1955, ten trying years of dictatorship. It was a letter of thanks. The story behind that would probably be included by her hypothetical biographer. During those years, when resisting the regime meant prison or worse, she took her stand for freedom bravely, went to join the exiles in Uruguay. There she was not silent by any means, when her name alone meant association with the resented "oligarchy."

"I am a woman who has lived."

"I could not live without my sense of humor."

". . . I am not a normal creature. I am a little mad. All artists are a little mad."

"I was born on January 6, Armenian Christmas Day. Providence heaped me uncommonly with gifts."

". . . I have not only used my legs. I have used my intelligence."

In 1961 she was officially invited to visit Armenia. There she met Khruschev. She must have told that story many, many times.

"One day, in Yerevan, when I was really feeling unwell, I had the flu, they came to tell me I had to go to a dinner, that Khruschev wanted to meet personally all the guests from abroad. It was almost an order. When we arrived, we were asked what we wanted to say to Khruschev. People had their names put down. Except I. Suddenly the President of the Armenian Republic asked me to speak. I said I had nothing to say. He insisted. I said, 'As I am ordered to speak, I'll do so under your responsibility.' I felt myself rebelling. Whereas the others addressed him as 'Your Excellency,' I said 'Mr. Khruschev.' I talked to him in Russian. He was surprised. I said, 'I ask as a woman that you give us fifty years of peace. We are tired of wars. We are tired of sending our men to war. We are tired of false peaces.' He smiled. I said, 'What a nice smile you have.' He said 'Why don't you tell that to the government of your country?' I said, 'I do, I do all the time.' He said, 'What do you suggest?' I said, 'Lift the Iron Curtain, so that people can get in contact, so that some clean air can circulate.' He said, 'We send groups out of the country.' I said, 'If, for those fifty years of peace it is necessary to sacrifice a life, I am willing to give mine.' He said, 'What else do you want?' I said, 'I want what all Armenians want, our land.'

He said, 'The other day I was at Puragan. They took us to look out at night. The lands that have been taken away from you are lands in darkness. The lands that were lit up are in Soviet Armenia. I like the Armenian people. In every corner of the Soviet Republics there is a man whose name ends in *ian.* While I was a soldier, I shared my food with hungry Armenians.' He gave me the impression of being a very 'humane' person. He had a nice smile. I said, 'When are you going to lift up the Iron Curtain?' Then we had a banquet. They made me sit in front of Khruschev. Afterwards he came near me and said, 'Will you come to see me in Moscow?' There was a large bunch of roses on the table, I gave it to him saying, 'These are for you, but they don't dare give them to you. Take them.' I went outside, I really felt unwell, I had a temperature. Khruschev came out, as he was leaving, and asked why I had left. I told him I was feeling sick. He gave me his hand and repeated his invitation to visit him in Moscow. I never did."

During that trip she had a dramatic meeting with her father, over ninety years old, after half a century. "You are not my daughter," he said. "My daughter was beautiful."

The small apartment where she now lives, since the death of her husband, is full of mementos. On the wall there is a framed bull (Gontak) from our Vehapar, His Holiness Vazken I, giving her his blessings for her work. She showed me several letters and Christmas cards from him. There are many paintings on the walls, most of them by herself. She had several exhibitions in different countries, as well as in New York.

"It is difficult to be an Armenian. We have such a complex heritage. I would say to the new generations, we do not have armies and guns (in the Diaspora) to get back what is ours; we have, though, something more powerful than cannons: our creative talents."

She talks of her husband, whose portrait is one of her best paintings, of how she misses him, of their beautiful companionship. I have a personal question: "Did not your husband sometimes resent your eclipsing him?" "No. He appreciated the fact that I was his passport to the world."

"Many people have benefited from my virtues and my abilities. But only I have suffered from my faults."

What is her message to us?

"It is difficult to be an Armenian. We have such a complex heritage. I would say to the new generations, we do not have armies and guns (in the Diaspora) to get back what is ours; we have, though, something more powerful than cannons: our creative talents. In all corners of the earth Armenians are holding positions at the forefront. We have Hampartzoumians, Khachaturians, Saroyans . . . they are our arms. Our vanguard are our scientists, our artists, our thinkers. Only, with great wisdom we must ask for what has been cruelly wrenched from us, because the twentieth century claims to speak for human dignity."

Antranig Remembered



By Vahe Funduklian

The "war to end all wars" was over. Germany and her allies were prostrate. The two most powerful men in the world, President Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George, had expressed emphatically their governments' determination to see that the small nations got justice and freedom from their oppressors.

The deep shadow cast over our people by the tragic events of 1915 was broken by the rising sun of expectation: at long last the Armenians were to attain that freedom which had been denied them.

A delegation, headed by Nubar Pasha, was in Paris, preparing our national case to be submitted and pleaded at the Peace Treaty with Turkey.

It was the summer of 1919: My father, as delegate from London, was in Paris. His knowledge of the Armenian cause and command of Armenian, French, and especially English were very valuable. (English had replaced French as the international language of diplomacy, for neither President Wilson nor Prime Minister Lloyd George spoke any other language.)

There was a railway strike in England, and the date and time of my father's return were uncertain. I knew General Antranig was in town, but thought he knew my father was in Paris, and so I was not expecting him to call at the office.

However, he came round one morning and asked for father. I explained that he had been in Paris and was detained in London due to the railway strike. I invited him to come in and did my best to entertain him. A man in his fifties, with a good head of steel-gray hair and moustaches to match, Antranig was quite relaxed and his eyes were honest, kindly, and smiling. He was of medium height, with powerful, broad shoulders, giving the impression of great strength held in reserve.

I mentioned the strikes, and that it had been reported in the press that stones had been thrown at the volunteer

engine drivers. One newspaper had commented that revolutions could start from such an incident.

"What do you think, Zoravar?" I asked.

"There will be no revolution in this country," he replied. "It is the only one with a strong middle class that knows its rights and is prepared to defend them."

I remember at the time, I marveled that here was someone who had only been in the country a few weeks, had no knowledge of English social history, and yet had summed up the situation with such penetration.

My father returned and naturally he and Antranig spent a lot of time together. One day my father said to him, "There is a communication from the War Office. They want you to go to Cilicia and organize resistance and start a diversionary front against the Nationalist Turks." It is hard to imagine the British government turning to Antranig in their perplexity, but I suppose they felt they could rely on him.

"Is this to be an official expedition? Is the War Office going to provide munitions and any men?" he asked.

"Well, no," replied my father. "Unofficial."

"If it is official with the full support of the War Office, well and good; otherwise, I won't go. You see, if the news gets about that I have landed, such is the faith in my name, the people will rise and be slaughtered like sheep."

The realist was speaking again.

I remember another occasion vividly.

Antranig had come to lunch at our home. Father had been filling and refilling his glass with wine during the meal. After the table was cleared, we were all sitting around and my father, I think to keep the conversation going, asked, "Zoravar, how did you thrash the Turks at Zangezour?"

Antranig asked for a pencil and started drawing his battle plans on the white tablecloth. He looked flushed and he was talking rapidly.

"The sons of bitches were here, and our boys facing them." My mother was quite concerned in case he came to some harm as he warmed up to his subject. He was obviously excited as he relived the battle. His expression had changed from the kindly, relaxed man I had known, and I saw the cold eyes of the commander of men, the decision and determination which inspired such faith, loyalty, and affection in his troops.

Many years later, I went to visit an uncle in Switzerland.

"You are an admirer of Antranig," he said one day. "Now is your last chance to hear about him from one who was with him in the war. We are invited to tea, and you will be able to add to your recollections."

Our host had been with Antranig in the campaigns of the Russian army in Asia Minor and after the Revolution when the Russians went home.

"First of all," said our host, "he was completely without fear. We had taken a village, but from one house, someone kept firing. Antranig sent an envoy with a white flag to call on the solitary enemy to surrender.

"The reply was a shot which killed the bearer of the white flag.

" 'Shall we send another man?' we asked.

" 'Leave him to me,' he replied grimly.

"He was obviously furious at the death of one of his 'boys' carrying a white flag. .

"He then walked unhurriedly towards the house, knowing there was an armed man inside who had not observed the convention of the white flag. He called on the man to surrender, and getting no answer, he walked round to the back of the house, and with his powerful shoulders, he stove in the door, and with his revolver, shot the foe."

"One of the factors which contributed to his success," our host continued, "was his expert detailed knowledge of the terrain in which he was operating.

"Once he received orders to proceed to a certain meeting place and join up with another force.

" 'These orders cannot be executed,' he commented laconically. 'The route lies through hostile villages. Either I have to reduce them, one by one, in which case I cannot reach the meeting point in time, or I will have to leave sufficient men to cover them and I will have very few men left by the time I reach the meeting place—so the order is impracticable.' "

"Can you imagine," asked my host, "what the situation was when the Russian revolution started? One day we had a front, and the next, all the Russians had disappeared—gone home. So it was left to the other nationalities to re-create it, and oppose the Turks.

"As the Georgians were the most numerous, it was agreed that the Commander in Chief should be a Georgian. By one of the quirks of history, it transpired that he was related (by marriage) to the Turkish Commander in Chief. No energetic action could be expected from him. The Azerbeijanis would certainly not fight their Turkish kinsmen, so it was clear that only the Armenians would fight, but since they were under the command of a Georgian, they had no freedom of action."

It was this predicament that prompted General Torcom to proclaim the independence of Armenia, inexplicable at the time.

Summertime in 1918, Antranig was in Tiflis and



asked whether there were any Bolsheviks in the town. Yes, was the report, but they are in hiding.

"Can they transmit a message to Moscow?"

"Yes."

"Very well, tell them to inform Moscow that I will hold Tiflis with 15,000 men, if they can guarantee to send a Russian force within three weeks to take over."

Realist that he was, he knew it was only the Russian power that counted in that area.

The message was given but no reply was ever received. Probably the Central Government in Moscow was preoccupied fighting the White Russians and knew the young Caucasian Republics were there for the taking after they had overcome their more pressing opponents and were established as the *de facto* government.

I remember Antranig was especially angry about the surrender of Kars. He said he had asked a British officer how long it could hold out under siege.

"Three months."

"You will see, it will be surrendered within three days." Sadly, he noted that his gloomy prophecy was fulfilled. He never forgave the Dashnag party for the surrender, which he called the action of traitors.

The will to fight was lacking in a government beset with the problems of famine, epidemics, and lack of transport and supplies. My father was told that the Georgians would not return the railway trucks sent from Erevan to Batum.

Antranig went to the U.S.A., and we heard later that he had married.

Some years later, we received a letter from my brother in New York (he worked for the Karagheusians, who were well known for their public spirit).

"Who do you think turned up at the office?" he wrote. "None other than Antranig. But the old war lion was in poor shape. His teeth had gone black, and he was worried—mortgage and other problems."

It is not easy for one whose life has been spent as a "freedom fighter" to settle down to civilian life, in a strange country, not speaking the language, and with no settled income.

When he saw my brother, his expression brightened, as he remembered him from happier times in Manchester. He said he recalled with pleasure working with my father on our national affairs, and expressed his happy memories of my mother's gracious hospitality at our home.

Armenia Preserved:

The Armenian Family as Revealed through the Photograph

By Ruth Thomasian

Armenian life has traditionally centered around the family, fulfillment being achieved through position in the family. With the advent of photography in 1838, it became possible to capture and preserve the look of these relationships by means of a visual image on paper. People enjoyed gathering with their families to pose in front of the photographer. Those Armenians who immigrated to the United States before the largest and most devastating of the Turkish massacres, in 1915, brought their family photographs with them. Those who remained behind often mailed a yearly photograph to their loved ones abroad. For Armenians caught up in the death marches to the desert, family photographs were necessarily left behind and were undoubtedly destroyed, although a few tattered specimens did survive the ordeal.

It is understandable that Armenians who today have photographs of their old-country relations treasure them as priceless remembrances. Many of those who do not have even one photograph of a loved one often feel that they are without family ties in almost the same way that orphans do. This is the impact of the photographic image: life comes and goes, but a photograph endures from generation to generation.

To show Armenian family development from the late 1890s to 1930, I have chosen eight pictures from my collection of photographs of Armenian people and their environs. Each photograph is a typical image, the kind about which people often say, "Oh, everyone has one of those." In their commonness they provide evidence of customs and conventions.

What can one tell about the "Armenian family" from a photograph? From a single, isolated, undocumented photograph, perhaps not much. But once primary-source information has been gathered, and the who, what, and where established, a single photograph can speak about people, exposing relationships and revealing character, and can serve as a stimulus for charming stories and chilling anecdotes. A collection of well-documented photographs can communicate trends and traditions.

As you look at these photographs, think about the process. You might imagine what the people were doing just before each photograph was taken. Feel the anticipation in which the people put on their best clothes and adorned themselves with appropriate props such as gold jewelry, a book for the hand, a favorite pipe, or a toy for a child. Wonder about what the people were thinking as they tried not to move during the three-to-five-minute exposure period. Notice how the people are sitting or standing in relation to each other. And by all means, enjoy the visual stimulation of these vintage photos.

Then consider what the photographs say about "family." With each photograph are facts I have acquired through the course of documentation. First I credit the source of the photograph with the name of the person who gave it or loaned it to me. Following that you will find the basic information about the people, when and where the photograph was taken, and in one case, where the information is known, the name of the photographer. Then you will find interpretive information that I have developed through comparative analysis and sociological study.

(provided by Mr. Hovsep Karakashian of Watertown, Massachusetts)

Karakashian family, 1914, in Marash, Turkish Armenia. Hovsep is standing, center back, with his father and mother and four of his five brothers.

When the photographer posed this family, he planned a space for the Karakashian's eldest son, Misak, who was in the United States at the time. Later, this space, on the right in front of the drapery, would be filled in with an individual photograph of Misak.

The photographic image held this family together and preserved it. The Turkish massacres destroyed this family and left three of its sons to live as orphans.





(provided by Mr. Serop Bogosian of Astoria, New York)

Adapted photograph of the Bogos Bogosian family, 1910, in the village of Nipshee of the town of Palou near Kharpert City, Turkish Armenia

This photograph is the embodiment of the word "extended." In terms of the definition of extended family, the image is typical of the old country where structure was formed around the eldest male, the patriarch, seated here surrounded by several generations.

As if to mirror the complexities of the extended family, the composition of this photograph is complicated by the events of history. In the original image the patriarch's son, Sahag, was absent. Several years earlier he had left home to find work in the United States. The photograph was sent to him as a remembrance of his family. In the meantime the Turkish massacres wiped out everyone pictured in the photograph except for Sahag's son, Serop, the boy standing on the right in front of his grandmother and next to his grandfather.

Years later, when Sahag and Serop were reunited in the United States, Serop found a family photograph among his father's things. He took it to a photographer and instructed him to "drop in" a picture of his father in the place where a neighbor had stood. He also had a picture of himself as a young man (at the very left) dropped in along with a palm plant to cover up a break in the lineup.

The process of photography spanned the years of absence and bridged the miles of separation, providing "extension" in terms of time and space. Now the family was back together again with Serop's life extended by the grace of God.

(provided by Dr. Carnig J. Thomason of Weston, Massachusetts)

Carnig J. Tovmassian, 1912, in Watertown, Massachusetts. Photographer: K. K. Najarian, South Boston

The Armenian babe as American citizen is symbolic of life in the new country in terms of rebirth, individuality, and freedom of expression. This genre of photograph, the nude baby, represents the changing emphasis in the Armenian family: the patriarch-centered extended family of the old country is becoming the child-centered family of the modern age.

The mother of baby Carnig told how her seven-month-old son had insisted on holding a sprig from their back-yard cherry tree before he would pose for the photographer.

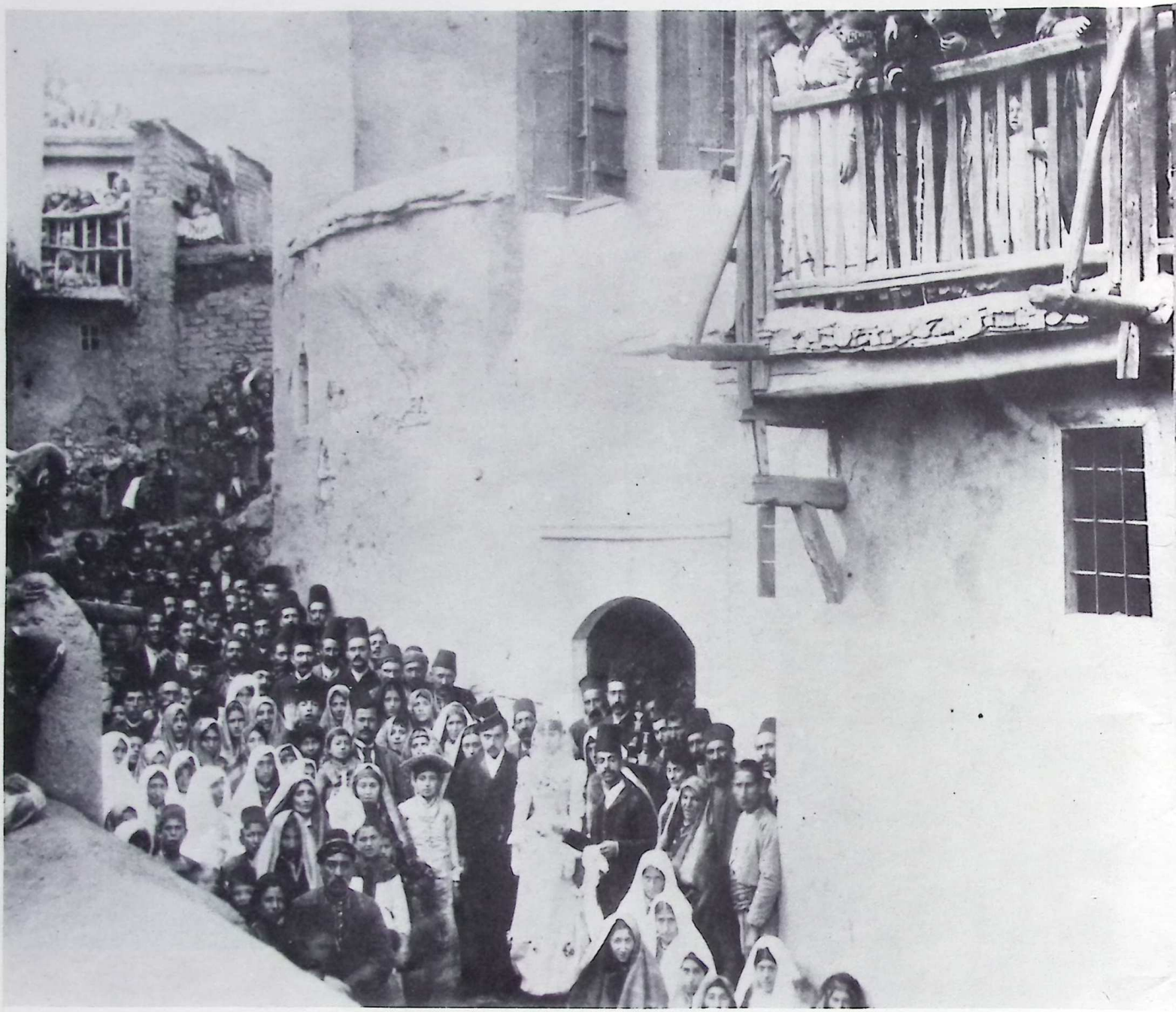




(provided by Mr. John Babaian of Franklin Square, New York)

Antoyan mothers and children, 1910, in Fresno, California

Children were the hope of Armenians orphaned by the great Turkish massacres of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These children, growing up in the fertile valley of Fresno, California, were spared the tag "starving Armenians" with all its ramifications of bloated bellies and maimed minds. To live in the United States of America was also the hope of Armenians.



(provided by Mr. Ardashess Hampar of New York City)

Zouloumian wedding, 1892, in Kharpert, Turkish Armenia

Old-country weddings offered an opportunity for the community to be "family." Here are the Armenians of Kharpert pressed together in the narrow street, hanging over balconies, looking up at the photographer who captured them in the environment of their daily living. There Kharpertzes, eager to share in the spirit of this special day, represent the support system that existed in Armenian society.



(provided by Mr. Avedis Kachichian of Stoneham, Massachusetts)

Kachichian family, 1910, in Killis, Turkish Armenia

This pre-World War I Armenian family is similar to the extended Armenian families of the nineteenth century. In order to maintain the extended family life style, status quo was essential.

Here the patriarch and his wife are surrounded by their sons, their wives, and their children. Everyone is an aunt, an uncle, or a cousin. Family protocol dictated the position of the people in front of the camera: children gathered in front, the eldest son closest to the patriarch with younger sons and women in back and toward the sides. The photographer directed his subjects how to sit and stand in order to achieve a handsome portrait.

(provided by Mrs. Araxie Barsamian of New York City)

Araxie Giragosian and Bedros Barsamian on the occasion of their wedding, August 14, 1921, in Beirut, Lebanon

The simplified wedding photographs of the 1920s give evidence that the extended family was breaking up. The young girls who had survived the death marches and had been protected in orphanages were ready to be married. Mail-order arrangements combined adolescent girls with older men, often from the United States. After the ceremony a photograph was taken of the couple facing the camera, alone, just as they would have to face the world, without their families around them.

Here stand Araxie and Bedros together on equal footing, holding hands in a gesture of partnership. Life would not be easy for Araxie, an orphan experienced only in tragedy, and Bedros, a penniless clerk who had recently become a United States citizen. Their union created four children and lasted fifty-five years.



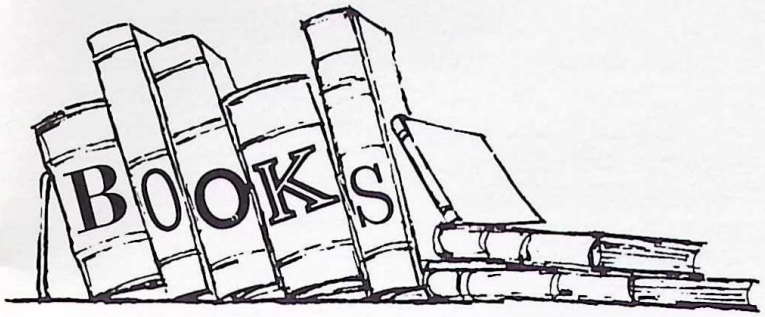


(provided by the late Mrs. Haighganoosh Serverian of Valley Stream, New York)

Fendekian family picnic, 1930, in Paris, France

The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, which put limits on United States immigration by the use of a quota system based on national origin, was responsible for the separation of this family. Too soon the quota closed, leaving the daughter, newly married Haighganoosh, in the United States separated from her widower father, Semon Fendekian, and her younger brother and sisters in Paris.

A yearly tradition developed. Haighganoosh gathered her family and in-laws together for a photograph and sent it to her father in Paris. In 1930 Mr. Fendekian brought the photograph along on a picnic, propped it up on the picnic cloth and united everyone in a toast before the camera.



OUR GALLIC COUSINS

By Ara Baliozian

LES ARMENIENS: REVEIL OU FIN? (The Armenians: The End or a New Beginning?) by Varvara Basmadjian. Editions Entente (12, Rue Honore-Chevalier, 75006 Paris, France). Maps. Bibliography. 1979. 167 pages. (In French)

This concise and elegant introduction to Armenian history and culture begins at the beginning and reaches the present day, with particular emphasis on the Armenian community in France. It is divided into eight sections: "How a Nation Was Formed," "Christian Armenia," "Cultural Identity," "Cilician Kingdom," "A Nation Without a State," "The Diaspora," etc. There are also listings of Armenian-interest films, books, addresses of French-Armenian organizations, political headquarters, schools and churches, and recipes of Armenian national dishes.

A more informative section deals with the diaspora. The Armenian communities of Greece, Lebanon, Turkey, Syria, Cyprus, Israel, Iran, Egypt, United States, Canada, and a number of other places get a short subheading of their own, wherein the press, institutions, and densely populated areas are cited and sometimes discussed.

On the whole this is an enormously useful reference work, especially for the French-Armenian reader. The equivalent work for Armenian-American readers is Arra S. Avakian's *Armenians in America* (87 pages, illustrated, index, California: Lerner Publications, $4.95), which, however, is too sketchy. The interested reader might also find the special issue of *Ararat* (Winter 1977), which is devoted to the Armenian presence in the United States, a highly informative sourcebook.

Wife of poet Garig Basmadjian, Varvara Basmadjian was born in Istanbul in 1947 and educated in France. Presently employed as a correspondent for the Associated Press, she is the author of a thesis titled "The Representation of the Last Judgement in Armenian Miniature Painting" (Paris, 1973) — which may explain why, in the work under review, the section dealing with art is more detailed and insightful than the one dealing with literature.

SHAPING UP INSIDE

By G. H. Chopourian

FOR ALL YOUR SEASONS by Carnegie Calian. John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1979. 135 pages. $7.50.

Though *For All Your Seasons* is not written to be read at one sitting, doing so has the particular advantage of catching the unusually broad sweep of the human needs for everyday living that the author treats. Even a professional in the field of Christian life and counseling obtains beneficial insights and is tempted to steal stimulating phrases for his own use. Here and there he will find his eyes moistening as a result of the emotional impact of touching human stories, one of which is about the author's reaction to the death from cancer of his own hard-working widowed immigrant mother—his denial, his anger and bargaining with God, his depression and final acceptance. Reading at one sitting the twenty-five aspects of life he treats has a cleansing effect —one feels edified, cleansed, whole.

This book applies the Scriptures to the needs of daily life and provides answers from the Christian perspective to most aspects of living in a practical yet inspirational way. His informal, nonacademic and nontechnical effort to communicate an "uncomplicated word of encouragement and challenge" arises out of his conviction that God's word can speak to human needs and help free people from external pressures, hopelessness, despair, meaninglessness.

Calian subdivides his text into five parts, each dealing with five important practical topics. Because we all undergo times of doubt about self, growth, reputation, security, and God, his Part One deals with "Answers to Doubts." The climax of self-acceptance is reached, he believes, when "Saturated in God's love, we have a sense not only of our own self-importance, but also the self-importance of others who, like us, enjoy God's love." Failure is not always "failure" but a means to growth, because *losing* is an integral part of *living*. Insecurity, he demonstrates, is moderated when we focus our priorities on wholeness and understand and accept the proper and inseparable relationship between the material and spiritual. Our questioning of

God, similarly, finds its proper balance when we rid ourselves of false attachments and are liberated of those false gods instead of being liberated from "belief in God."

Part Two, ("Search for Relationships") is about selecting friends, overcoming alienated relationships, the need for disagreeing when great issues are at stake, and the good prospects for wholesome marriage relationships and family responsibilities.

Part Three deals with "Guidance for Midlife," with subtopics on suffering and life goals ("There is no gospel without a cross; without paying the price, there's no prize,") paying bills ("A Biblical policy of contentment within the context of godliness promises in the long run to reduce your bills and rearrange your priorities in life"), career change ("God beckons us to have portable roots in order to advance in our earthly pilgrimage."), fighting injustice ("Injustice is woven into the very tapestry of life—the call is for our contemporary Moseses and Aarons to effectively encounter the Pharoahs of our day and seek justice in the name of God for all victories.") and facing the unknown ("We do not face it alone—the future is with God.").

The universality and inevitability of aging and death and our capacity to deal with them creatively and meaningfully, faith and healing, boredom and its remedy, and the need for Job-like tenacity to hold on because there is a purpose in God constitute Part Four.

Calian concludes with Part Five, "Responses to Stress." Do you have difficulty in making decisions? Can you truly "give thanks" in the midst of tragic circumstances? Is it really possible to stop anyone from worrying by telling him not to worry, when worry is truly part of living? Do you think you are beyond criticism and, if not, how can you accept it? Are you looking for some understanding of the good life and can't find it? These questions are discussed constructively in this section.

Calian's book would be a great resource book for study by groups: youth and adult Sunday schools; Bible study groups; men's and women's gatherings for meaningful dialogue. There is a wealth of material which would spark greater aspects of the problems reviewed in "dialogue" situations.

A generous grant from the David S. Sohigian Foundation has paid the cost of printing this issue of* Ararat. *The editorial board and the editor wish to thank the president of the foundation, York T. Mandra, for this substantial gift.

POLICE ACADEMY GRADUATES

By James Magorian

Finishing near the top
of their class, they fill
their canteens with brackish
water and start across
the graph in the newspaper
where humiliated camels are
tethered at decent intervals.

The editors of* Ararat *wish also to thank the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for a supporting grant of $800. This is the sixth grant from CCLM.

AFTER LABOR DAY

By Anna Lisa Soorikian

The breezes are thick now,
Like gelatin that
Molds into sculptured fish.
When all of the salt dries up, and
Evaporates in the sun,
Then we shall wander in towards land.
Perched on the shoulder of this sagging island,
We don't need to question or agree—
The mind works so slowly here.

Durable block of dust and paradise,
Indian blood and German submarines
Cling to your soul.
Lady of mystery, like a ship that trusts the sea
You overwhelm sense with the physical.

Summer ends.
Your weight lifts.
The air has begun to thin
And whitecaps decorate the sea.
The pond rests,
No longer swollen with
Shellacked hulls and bright
Spinnakers.
Emptiness agrees with
Beauty.

MISCONCEPTION

By Judith Halloran

Akh
My unborn daughter
  Tamar
lies in my belly silent
  unconceived.

I am a young boy crossing
  Lake Van, swimming
towards beloved Tamar who
is hidden in the waters
  of my belly silent.

I am *odar.* You,
  beloved Hai,
have extinguished the light
  of your love, my guide.

Akh! Tamar, my
  misconception
lies in my heart
  silent.





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