

Relates War Experiences in Turkey

Miss Sophie S. Holt, Missionary, Tells of Conditions Among Armenians and of Cruelty and Lack of Courage Among Ottoman Soldiers.

Miss Sophie S. Holt, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Holt of 718 West Fifth street, returned this week from Adabazar, Turkey, in Asia, where she has been engaged for five years in missionary work of the Congregational church. She has been principal of the Armenian girls' high school and when she was forced to leave the city in August was the only American-born person in the entire population. There was another American citizen in Adabazar, a 10-year-old Armenian girl, whose father was a naturalized American living in Indianapolis, Ind. She was allowed to leave with Miss Holt when the orders were received from Constantinople to expell foreigners.

"The work of American missions is at a standstill," Miss Holt said yesterday. "It will be necessary for us to begin at the beginning. One of our buildings is being used as a hospital for soldiers. The only book of our library that was saved was a Bible; we were not allowed to take away books or papers. As an inventory of our property was left with the authorities we hope to get some war indemnity.

"The Turks are trying to kill all the Christians or make them accept Mahammedanism. Heretofore they have been held back by the fear of the Europeans and I think they consider their end is near and are trying to take their revenge on Christians.

"The American ambassador in Constantinople is a Jew by religion, a German by birth and says that first of all he is an American. He has been a

wonderful help to the Christians, and because he is German has a great deal of influence with the Turkish authorities. He is said to have offered £100,000 of his own money to send Armenians to America, but the Turkish government refused to allow them to leave.

"Since the war began our letters have been strictly censored and we have been allowed to write in only French, German or Turkish. To evade the censorship a massacre is often described by saying, 'A tornado came and blew away all the men, only one escaped.' The authorities see the words themselves are harmless and do not grasp the meaning. Often all but the first half of the last sheet and the last half of the last sheet of a letter is destroyed and what gets by the censor is marked 'long letters not allowed.'

"The mayor and the other officials of Adabazar were very friendly to the Christians and many of the Turks feel very badly that such terrible things have happened but the orders came from Constantinople.

"It is said the Armenians were expelled because the Turks are afraid the Armenians in Russia and in the interior will help the Russians. It is perfectly wonderful the way the Armenians have acted during the trying times. They are generally excitable but there has been perfect silence and they have shown great fortitude, patience and faith and no bitterness.

"You hear of the bravery of Turkish soldiers. They have been dreadful cowards. They fight because the officers stand over them with guns and

they have to fight or be shot. One evening the troops were drilling in the streets and when a false alarm was given that the Russians were coming the soldiers ran away. The Turkish army owes everything to German discipline; all the officers are Germans. The Armenians whom the Turks have forced into their ranks are the ones who do the fighting.

“A great deal of relief work is being done in Constantinople in Red Cross and Red Crescent hospitals. A few of the women in Constantinople are very progressive.”

Miss Holt and the little Armenian girl whom she brought with her and who is now in Indianapolis with her father, left Adabazar Aug. 10, and were

seven weeks on their journey. Their boat was searched by the English and on account of German and Austrian submarines had to proceed very cautiously with no lights on deck and subdued lights in the staterooms.

The missionaries may have nothing left after the war is over, as it is the people with whom they have been working are scattered. But they hope to return to Turkey and call back the people or begin work where the people have settled. It is Miss Holt's purpose to collect money with which to start the missions anew and with this end in view she will address any church that will take up a collection for the re-establishment of the missionary work.

