

Girl-Slave of Turks Who Found Refuge in City Now Finds Happiness as Bride

[photo of Arman P. Kanian and Vartanousch Karagheusian accompanies article]

Armenian Victim to Wed Countryman in Minne- apolis Tonight.

Horrors of Deportation Soon to Be Forgotten, Says Bridegroom.

Broken in health, her nerves shattered, her mind lashed cruelly by a thousand fearful memories, a 20-year-old Armenian girl came to Minneapolis—a refugee from the tortures of the Turks.

That was two years ago. Yesterday that same girl came into The Tribune office to give the announcement of her wedding—the same girl, but no one who had seen her two years ago would have recognized her.

Flush of Youth Regained.

Yesterday she looked strong and vigorous. The flush of youth and health was in her dark cheeks. Every now and then a deep, musical laugh interrupted her description of the wedding gown. And the light in her brown eyes made everybody who passed her want to stop and look at her again and again.

Her name is Vartanousch Karagheusian. The bridegroom is Arman P. Kanian, employed in the rug department of a downtown store. The Rev. Stanley Kilbourn will officiate at the wedding, at 8 o'clock tonight in Gethsemane church, and the bride will wear the traditional costume of American brides—"white satin, with a veil, and big bouquet," as she herself describes it.

More than 10 years ago, back in the days before the World war, the families

of Vartanousch and Arman both lived in the city of Sivas, "a month's walk from Constantinople."

Families Acquainted.

Sivas has—or had—a population of about 25,000, but the two families became acquainted when Arman's sister married and moved into the ward where Vartanousch's family lived. Arman was a young man, about 20 years old, then, and Vartanousch a little girl of 11 or 13. And after the manner of big boys, Arman was entirely unaware of the existence of the little Vartanousch—then.

Arman knew her big brother, John, however, and when he came to America later and then to Minneapolis he and John procured positions in the same store and became fast friends. Vartanousch's brother is John N. Karagheusian, rug buyer for a downtown store. He lives at 211 Fifteenth street west.

Vartanousch grew up in Sivas, back in Turkey. And then, in 1915, came the Turks, and like thousands of her race she was for months the slave of the cruel murderers of the Near East. All of her family then living in the old country, save one sister, were massacred by the Turks. And of his family, Arman is now the sole survivor.

On the girl's right thumb is tattooed a blue cross, mark of Mohammedan slavery. The mark was placed there in 1915, just before she was driven from her home with eight relatives, among the thousands of Armenian women who were deported to Aleppo by the Turks.

From July to October that pitiful company staggered along the road to Aleppo, driven ceaselessly onward by brutal Turkish guards. Their food they found only in the vegetation along the march. For weeks they lived on

grass and leaves. For three days at a time they went without water.

One by one the marchers dropped along the way to die. The girl's mother died in her arms, victim of the murderers of a race. One by one her other relatives succumbed. Her sister disappeared. She alone of the entire family survived the horrors of the march. And meanwhile the women were horribly mistreated by the Turks.

"We were their slaves," Vartanousch says simply when she speaks of it nowadays—which is not often.

Escapes Guards.

Later, through the help of a girl friend, Vartanousch escaped from her Turkish guards and found work in a Turkish hospital at the Zaleh base. She nursed wounded soldiers there for many months. When the British captured Jerusalem, she disguised herself as a Turkish soldier by stealing the uniform of one who had died in the hospital. In this manner she escaped to the Allied lines.

While working in a soup kitchen she met an Armenian from her home city, serving in the French army. He had been in America, and he immediately notified her brother in Minneapolis of her whereabouts, and through the Near East Relief commission arrangements were made for her to come to America on an Army transport. Her brother met her in New York, and on January 4, 1920, she arrived with him in Minneapolis.

One of the first persons she met in her brother's home in Minneapolis was Arman Kanian—and he begged her to tell him what had become of his family. She could tell him nothing, however. The two families had been deported in different groups. No word has ever been heard from Arman's parents and his brothers and sisters.

Engaged Eight Months.

In the months that followed the girl's arrival in Minneapolis, Arman was often at her brother's home. Eight months ago— "Well, we just became engaged," as Arman puts it.

Arman has rented and furnished an apartment for his bride at 315 Fifteenth street west, just a block from her brother's home. Beautiful Oriental rugs, a phonograph, and—an electric iron! These are some of the things Vartanousch mentions with shining eyes when she tries to tell you about that apartment.

There is to be a wedding present from Arman for Vartanousch—only she won't tell him what she wants.

"It shall be anything—anything she wants," says Arman.

But Vartanousch only looks at him teasingly and laughs—that deep, musical laugh.

Fifty Guests Invited.

S. M. Aidian and Mrs. Kargheusian, the bride's sister-in-law, will be the attendants at that wedding tonight. Mrs. Karagheusian will wear ivory colored crepe de chine. Fifty guests, Armenians and Americans, will attend the

wedding, and the ceremony will be followed by an informal reception at the church.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving day. And Vartanousch?

"I am glad, so glad I came to America," she says, with a little catch in her voice.

"No, she seldom mentions those horrible experiences back in the homeland," Arman said yesterday. "Most of the horror of it all has left her, I think.

"And now—she shall forget."

Transcribed from a clipping in the collection of Lucy Kanian Desteian, Minneapolis, daughter of Arman P. and Vartanoush Karagheusian Kanian.