

In consequence of this newly introduced system of extortion the land is passing into the hands of Moham-medans. Fifteen years ago 95 per cent of the Armenian population owned their lands; now only 35 per cent are landowners. The remainder have by degrees been forced to become farmers and day-labourers to their Kurdish and Turkish neighbours, and this also causes the whole prosperity and economy of the country to decline; for the Kurds do not work at all, and the Turks badly, while the Armenians who know how to cultivate land are servants and slaves. Agriculture is going to ruin, and it is difficult to conceive what interest or advantage the Turkish Government can have in impoverishing the country. Thus, for instance, the assessed taxes in one district now amount to £6000, where twelve years ago they were as much as £18,000.

The day of rest soon came to an end, and at dusk the genial M. Srabyan conducted me to the Armenian Gregorian cathedral, maintained at the cost of the Armenian community in Erzerum, which contains several men of property. The interior of the temple is of grand simplicity. The poorer worshippers listen to the service standing on the mat-covered floor; for women there are enclosures with lattices, for the Armenian women are also thinly veiled in long white draperies. Outside is a churchyard, with closely packed tombstones bearing inscriptions and crosses, and on two of the grander tombs monuments like chapels are carved in Armenian style.

The first evening I dined with M. Srabyan, and had an opportunity of seeing how an Armenian house was conducted—much as in Europe, and the ladies wore the simple dark and becoming costume of their native land, a kind of diadem in the hair, but not the white veil which conceals the figure, though it is, indeed, ornamental. Slender, melancholy, and wan, the Armenian ladies loiter about and look like brides, as if every day were a wedding-day for them. One is touched by sympathy and compassion for this unfortunate and oppressed people, and experiences a feeling of grief and shame that the Great Powers of Europe can in our modern times look on passively while Turkish dogs crush down a Christian people.