

COPIED WAR RELIEF  
RELIEF

Tiflis, Russia.  
Dec. 12th, 1915.

Dr. Samuel T. Dutton,  
70 Fifth Ave.  
New York, N. Y.

My dear Dr. Dutton,

This will confirm my letter to you written from Stockholm in which I mentioned the need of securing some sort of credentials for Dr. Wilson but which I learn from the Embassy in Petrograd have been secured.

I would also confirm to you my cable from Baku of the 6th inst. in which I stated that the need was fully as great as we had supposed and that I would send further particulars as soon as I could which I thought would have been on the morrow, but which I had to wait a few days for so as to give you accurate information.

Following that cable the American consul Mr. Smith sent the following cable to the State dept. and which you no doubt will have had copy of before this. "Total numbers of refugees in Caucasus 170,000 not including those accessible in Turkish Armenian and Persia. With the Viceroy's sanction have outlined a plan of cooperation with the local and government committees. Need very great question is how many can committee take care of. Estimated cost about five dollars per head per month. Can committee care for 20,000."

The next day that is the 11th inst. I supplemented this cable by one reading as follows: "In addition to Consul's yesterdays cable in Turkish Armenia accessible provinces 15,000. Persia 40,000 exclusive of Tabriz and Urumia. Funds for warm clothing urgently needed in addition to per capita estimate. Awaiting instructions."

Before coming to a general discussion of the situation I would first very briefly state something of what has been done so far by Mr. Smith and myself in respect to the securing of the necessary cooperation of the authorities here.

As to my hope to have been able to have sent you information from Petrograd I would say that I was very dissatisfied in this as neither Embassy had any intelligence that I thought of sufficient value to cable you.

On my arrival here I found that Mr. Smith had not felt his way clear to the disposing of the money cabled by you to him. He however immediately got in touch with Prince Orloff who is the aide-de-camp to the Viceroy who was much interested in our work, and has very graciously offered us every assistance in his power and has invited our cooperation in the really splendid work that is already going on carried on by the government and local committees. Just as soon as a reply comes from you in answer to our cable which will enable us to know definitely as to how much we can feel responsible for the organizing and the further letter trying to content myself now with a hasty and cursory glance at the facts that have so far come under my own notice.

First of all let me repeat the words of my first cable and emphasize with all the vigor of earnestness that the situation here in respect to the Armenian refugees is fully as bad as we had been led to believe, and that to attempt to adequately describe the horrors of it would be a task altogether beyond me. As for the figures I need not repeat them, they stand at the beginning of my letter and speak for themselves that is they tell in bald colorless way the actual facts of the case, but it would take the pen of a Dickens to give the pathos and misery of it proper justice.

Last evening I dined with a gentleman who had come up out of Persia a few months ago just about the time the last great exodus took place. He relates that on the arrival of his train at Ahni on the great Erivan Plain he saw one of the most moving sights of his life. That great level plain was black with a slow moving mass of humanity that seemed to fill and overflow the horizon as far as the eye could see. He states that they must have numbered close on to 250,000 and that they were slowly, aimlessly, listlessly wandering in the torrid heat of that September day. Children were dying by the hundreds, sometimes the frenzied mothers would in their helpless mad grief fling their children from them over the roadside into the fields so as not to see the dying agonies of their emaciated and starved babies. Old women and men were dropping

out by the roadside too far gone to go another step, epidemics had already appeared and were claiming their victims by the hundreds, and amidst this scene of death and desolation women were seen giving birth to children in all the pangs of that terrible time in the life of a woman. From that throng he said there went up to heaven such an unutterable wail of woe and misery that he was compelled to close down the window in his compartment to try if possible to shut out the sound of that concentration of agony and pain which was wrung from the lips of those homeless destitute wanderers.

They have been on the march constantly for weeks, have been forced most of them to leave on a moments notice, have had no time to prepare for the journey and apart from what they had been able to secure from the fields and the villages they passed through had been without food or sustenance. Children had lost their parents, parents their children and have never been able to find each other again, families have been broken up some have wandered on into the other parts of the Caucasus, others have gone into Persia, others again have gone back into Turkey, and taking the whole of this exodus as a whole I do not think that for real pathos and concentrated misery a similar instance can be found in history.

Out of the hundreds of stories that are daily coming to hand it is hard to make a choice for all alike are most interesting and touching. We hear for instance of Cossack transports picking up scores of little children left by the roadside to die and of their bringing these in on their wagons, sharing their frugal meals with the of women found dead by the roadside and a baby trying to waken the mother by pulling at her face and demand its food. Of new born babies left just as they were born, carelessly flung aside the mother often dying shortly afterwards, or of a Russian officer out at the front sitting crouched over a little fire that he had made out of a few sticks, and of a little girl stiff with the cold and hungry, slipping along into the circle of heat of the fire, and without apology snuggling up to him and going fast asleep in a moment in the kindly warmth of the fire and of that officer sitting cramped for hours in order to let the little waif sleep in the folds of his big army coat.

But why go on, the tale is an endless one and grows more horrible as the details slowly filter in.

I have seen some myself, have looked into the faces of hunted, haunted children prematurely old through the months of horrors that they have gone through, have looked too into the eyes of young women and girls, alas too apparent already the condition they are in, hateful outrage and nightmare behind them, more and worse facing them after a month or two. I have seen just a little, but that little is enough to give me an idea of what the future holds in this line and quite enough to sicken and sadden.

This that I send you now is but a fragmentary sketchy touch of a condition serious and needy in the extreme, and I hastily send this so that you may be prepared for a picture of misery and sorrow sad and pathetic. Dr. Wilson, I hope will be here in a few days, and I shall have the value of his counsel and help and hope by that time we will have had word from you as to the extent of our work, and that we will soon be able to report definite work being started.

In the meantime accept hearty greetings, and believe me to be, yours very truly.

Richard Hill.

*Turkish Empire  
Northwestern Persia*