

was broken in and she was expecting immediate death, a Turk took her by the hand, and saying "Come, old woman, I am not going to hurt you," led her away and saved her life.

The spectacle which the church and churchyard present must be seen to be described; hardly a corpse has been buried; where a man fell there he now lies, and it is with difficulty that one picks one's way to the door of the church, the entrance of which is barred by a ghastly corpse stretched across the threshold.

I visited this valley of the shadow of death on the 31st of July, more than two months and a half after the massacre, but still the stench was so overpowering that one could hardly force one's way into the churchyard. In the streets at every step lay human remains, rotting and sweltering in the summer sun—here a skull of an old woman, with the gray hair still attached to it—there the false tress of some unhappy girl, slashed in half by a yataghan, the head which it had adorned having been probably carried off to be devoured by some of the dogs, who up to this have been the only scavengers.

Just outside the village I counted more than sixty skulls in a little hollow, and it was evident from their appearance that nearly all of them had been severed from the bodies by axes and yataghans. From the remains of female wearing apparel scattered about, it is plain that many of the persons here massacred were women.

It is to be feared also that some of the richer villagers were subjected to cruel tortures before being put to death, in hopes that they would reveal the existence of hidden treasure. Thus Petro Triandaphyllos and Pope Necio were roasted, and Stoyan Stoychoff had his ears, nose, hands and feet cut off.

Enough, I think, has been said to show that to Achmet Agha and his men belongs the distinction of having committed perhaps the most heinous crime that has stained the history of the present century, Nana Sahib alone, I should say, having rivalled their deeds.

As regards the numbers of killed, I have before stated that about 5,000 is my estimate. I am aware that others place it higher, but be this as it may, whether the slain are to be counted by hundreds or by thousands does not lessen in the least degree the criminality of the slayers. The intention was to exterminate all except those few girls (probably about 80) whom they carried off to satisfy their lusts. Those that escaped owed their safety to their own good fortune, and not to the tender mercies of their neighbours.

For this exploit Achmet Agha has received the Order of the Medjidié.

I am, however, willing to a certain extent to believe that the Turkish authorities were not aware, before I visited Batak, of the horrors that had been committed there. The place lies in the mountains, eight hours' from Bazardjik, is somewhat difficult of access, and till I went there no one had gone who was likely to give the authorities a faithful account of what he saw. Had they really known that the place was a mass of putrefying corpses, would they not have taken some measures to clear them away before I reached the scene?

A Turk who accompanied me from Bazardjik, and who on the way had been loud in his denunciation of the rebels, changed his tone completely when he really saw what his countrymen had done, and was not less horror-stricken than I was.

Edib Effendi's report as regards Batak is not worth criticism. I am informed that he never went there. I should only like to ask him two questions—

1. Was the whole village, which is principally built of stone, burnt down by a few "bâtisses en bois" being set fire to near the church?
2. Were the women who were decapitated outside the village, and whose bones the dogs were quarrelling over when I saw them, killed in the "combat terrible" which is supposed to have taken place?

Batak was a flourishing village, and carried on an active trade in planks. The sawmills have all been burnt, and 30,000 okes of iron carried off or destroyed. The loss in cattle is also great—1,000 yoke of oxen, 2,000 cows, 5,000 sheep and goats, and 800 horses having been stolen.

The surviving inhabitants live in wooden huts constructed outside the village,* and are in great misery; they are stunned by this disaster, and do not even try to bury their dead. Some of the women I saw sitting on the ruins of their houses singing the most melancholy sort of dirge; others wandered about the churchyard among the corpses, while a few who seemed more than half bereft of reason rushed about tearing their hair, beating their brows, and uttering piercing shrieks.

* About 250 people were living in the village when I went. About 1,000 were said to be at Peshtera and elsewhere. A considerable number, principally women, took advantage of my visit to return to their village.