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Torkom.

The Story of a Struggle Against Odds.

CHAPTER IV.

REVENGE.

A column of about two hundred Turkish soldiers toiled slowly up the long dusty road that lay between the lake and the large village of Tashlikeny.¹ The road was lined with mulberry groves, but the large green leaves drooped under the hot sun's rays. It was a beautiful spot, where a century before a colony of Armenians had settled. Numerous small villages of Mohammedans and a few of Greeks lay in the hills around. But here the Armenians held undisputed sway, except for the Turkish governor and a handful of police, who lived somewhat in awe of the independent villagers. To such an extent had the dwellers in Tashlikeny gained in self-confidence that they had begun to build their farm-houses, not in the village, but in their fields in the surrounding countryside. But this spring those whose houses were at a distance had hesitated about living so far from their fellows. The air was freighted with a scent of danger. Already some men who had gone out to their fields in the mornings had not returned at night-fall. Once a badly mutilated body had been recovered; once only a ghastly remnant, the top of the head, which was carried to the grave exposed in a little square box and followed by a mob hurling defiance at Fate. But generally mothers and wives and children looked in vain for the return of their loved ones.

So on this Sunday morning all the villagers were in town. The early service in the Armenian national church was over and the little body of Evangelicals had not yet gathered. All the men were out and the cafés were filled. A few had been drinking and there was considerable quarreling and an occasional pistol shot. But the coming of the soldiers brought with it quiet—the quietude of fear. The younger hot-bloods² had urged driving the soldiers away, but the counsels of the aged and experienced prevailed. "What could we do against two hundred armed soldiers, our shot-guns against their rifles and bayonets? Even if we could drive them away the next day a thousand would be sent. And

¹Tash—stone; keny—village.

²A literal translation of the Turkish "deti-kanli," youth.