

BOYS AND GIRLS

A Martyred Preacher in Turkey.

(“Missionary Herald.”)

About ninety miles east of Aintab, in Central Turkey, is the city of Oorfa, which was called Edessa by the Greek historians. Tradition makes it the same as Ur of the Chaldees, from which place Abraham set out for the land of Canaan. In this city in the year 1838 was born, of Armenian parents, a boy whose name was Hagop Abouhalatian. His father died when the lad was two years old, and the property which would have supported the children was wasted, and young Hagop

menian bishop declared that these Bibles were heretical, and ordered the man to leave the city; but the real fault he found with the Bibles was that they were in the language which the people could understand and not in the old Armenian, such as the priests read in the churches, but which very few of the people understand.

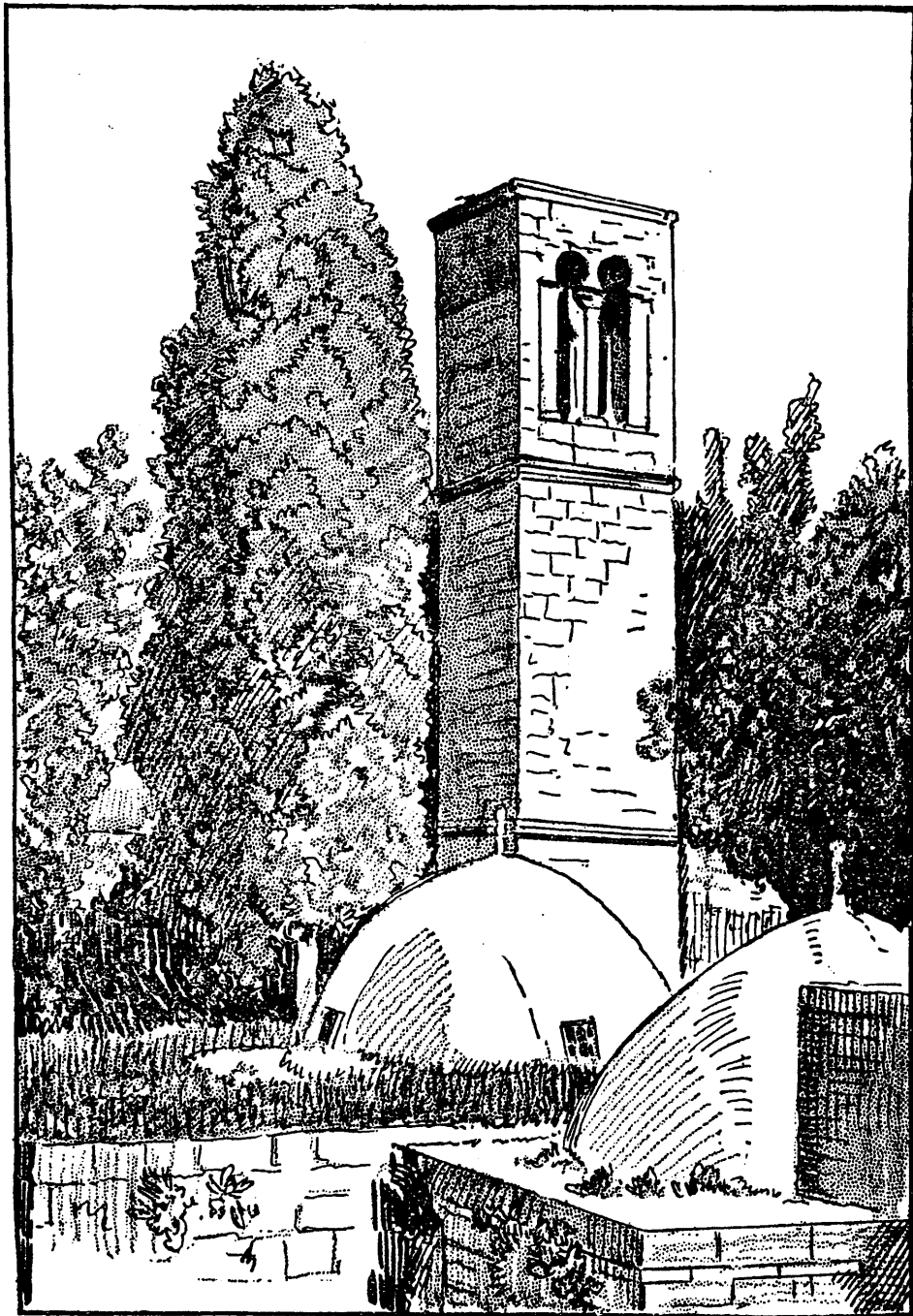
A little later a Christian physician came to Oorfa and often read the Bible to his patients. In a story of his own life which Hagop wrote in his later years we find this record made of his going to listen to this physician. It was when he was about fourteen years old:

Scripture and the words of grace which he spoke about our Lord Jesus Christ. I listened for two hours and then returned home. I could not forget what I had heard, and the desire to hear him again was growing in my heart. Yet I feared to arouse a spirit of persecution on the part of my mother and relatives. However, after eight days, I again went to see him secretly, and began to converse with him respecting the ceremonies of the Gregorian (Armenian) Church, but I was quite unable to answer him. He urged me to read the Epistle to the Romans, and the third chapter of the Gospel of St. John. For six months this man labored to bring me to a knowledge of the Saviour, and all this while was praying for me. At last the grace of God visited me, and the portion of Scripture by which it pleased God to do so was the seventh chapter of Romans; and having faith that only Jesus could save me from such a wretched state, I was not ashamed to confess it. Leaving all my cowardly and dreadful difficulties on him, without conferring with flesh and blood, I confessed the truth of the Bible. This was in 1853. By strength received from the Lord I succeeded in keeping the treasures of his salvation in this earthen vessel. The result of my conversion was my expulsion from the church and the school, and having been anathematized, my friends and relations turned against me, and my dear mother refused to see me for one year. Human nature could not have borne up under the trials which were my daily experience, had God not been my light, my salvation, and the protector of my life. My confession of truth not only changed me spiritually, but entirely altered all my prospects in life.

Notwithstanding these persecutions, Hagop remained steadfast, going to Aintab, where he was received into the church by Dr. Schneider, and joining a class which was to receive training for six months. After this he began to go about as preacher and teacher. Here is a little incident from his autobiography showing how he was accustomed to work:—

“Every Lord’s Day from 100 to 200 people gathered in this small room (for the people sat on the floor, as is the custom, and packed into little space). The schoolroom also was a low, dark little room. In this schoolroom I had from fifty to sixty children intrusted to my care, to teach them the Bible and how to live Christian lives, as well as arithmetic and the languages in common use, Turkish and Armenian. Up to the present time there had been no definite distinction between the duties of preacher and teacher. So I often led the prayer-meetings, visited the people and read the Bible in their homes, or preached in the chapel, as well as instructed the children. About half an hour’s walk from the city three Armenian families resided, and the head of one of them had been converted with his household. He earnestly invited me to give the Sabbath-school lesson in his house. When we gathered there and had knelt in prayer, on arising from our knees we found the house surrounded by about 100 men. We hastened from the spot, but had gone but a little way when our persecutors, enraged at finding that we had escaped from the house, followed and began to stone us. Of course, in seeking to injure us these poor deluded people thought they were worshipping God. Fortunately nothing serious occurred.”

We have not room to give details of the next few years during which Abouhalatian came to America and afterwards went to



THE OLD TOWER OF THE SCHOOL OF EDESSA, OORFA.

was obliged to go to work in a weavers’ shop, where he learned to read. Half of each day was spent in the shop and the other half in study.

When Hagop was eight or nine years of age he heard people say that some people from the other side of the world had come to Aintab and Smyrna, and that they were dreadful heretics, telling people that their fasts and anointings and worship of the Virgin and other images were useless and wrong. These were the American missionaries who, Hagop was taught, were trying to turn the Armenians from the true faith. But a little later a man came to Oorfa bringing a number of Bibles for sale. The Ar-

“One Sunday morning I thought I would go and see him, and if I should find any following him, I would go and complain about it to those who had authority, so as to injure them. I was afraid of being seen to go there lest I should be prosecuted, so I chose a time when I would not be seen by anybody. On entering the room I found there were about ten or twelve present, some of whom were discussing concerning the ceremonies of the Church, and I learned that the Protestants refused to accept anything not found in the New Testament. Although I had gone with a spirit of enmity against this man and the doctrine which he taught, I was surprised at his knowledge of Holy