

while he filled up the spare time by teaching them the elements of Christian doctrine and the chants to be sung in the Church on the following Sunday. But Torkom found this life a weariness to the flesh, so when his mother sent him to school he would run away and play cards with bigger boys and smoke dirty cigarettes and think he was a man. And then his father set him to herd the cattle of the village and his grandfather taught him to save up the one piastre a week which this brought him, for he knew the value of five cents a week. And so Torkom would lie on his back in the fields all day long and dream.

But one day the missionary came. His skin was fair, and he wore strange clothes, and couldn't speak, at least he spoke a strange tongue that no one could understand. And Torkom and all the other naughty little boys ran after him with unconcealed curiosity. And then they began throwing stones and calling the missionary names, because the priest had told them that he was the messenger of Satan. And Torkom's mother and father were sorry for the Missionary, but dared not interfere. They wondered what could have brought him here; but the old man said, "He is a man like ourselves. Perhaps he has lost his way, or perhaps he is crazy. But he has done us no harm, why should we molest him? If he comes to our house let us take him in and treat him as a guest." And when the mother hinted of witchcraft and the evil-eye, Ghazar Baba calmed their fears by assuring her that the crucifix and their blue beads would keep them from harm. And when she feared the resentment of the priest, he said, "Der Mugerditch has not seen as much of the world as I have."

And so it came about that the Missionary came to Torkom's home, and because his presence promised to the boy freedom from the tyranny of priest and schoolmaster, Torkom sought his side. And when his mother said, "Torkom is a bad boy; he will break my heart;" the Missionary patted him on the head and said, through his interpreter, "He is a bright little boy. Let him come to school with me and we will make a man of him." And because he knew the world, Ghazar Baba said, "Let the child go. He will become a great man and will bring honor to our village." The father also was persuaded and let the boy go. But the mother was afraid, for the priest had told her that he would now become an American which was worse than becoming a Catholic, for the Catholics worship the Pope but the Americans worship the devil and drink whiskey and do not believe in the Bible. But the father did not know what the priest had said, for he seldom went to church and his wife dared not challenge his authority at home, so the boy stayed away for three years, because the school was distant five day's journey on horseback, and the roads were dangerous. We may still see the place where some years later the Missionary and his servant were shot for the gold for which they were supposed to carry about in their saddle bags.² But Ghazar Baba died while Torkom was away at school.

1. Der—father, lord. The title of a priest. Mugerditch (proper noun)—Baptist.
2. The place is not far from where these lines are being written. Murders of foreigners used to occur occasionally. They are now almost unknown. But the cold-blooded murder of Armenians by Turks is frequent. Retaliation occasionally occurs and always brings punishment, swift and severe, not only upon the Armenian avenger but upon his luckless friends and neighbors.