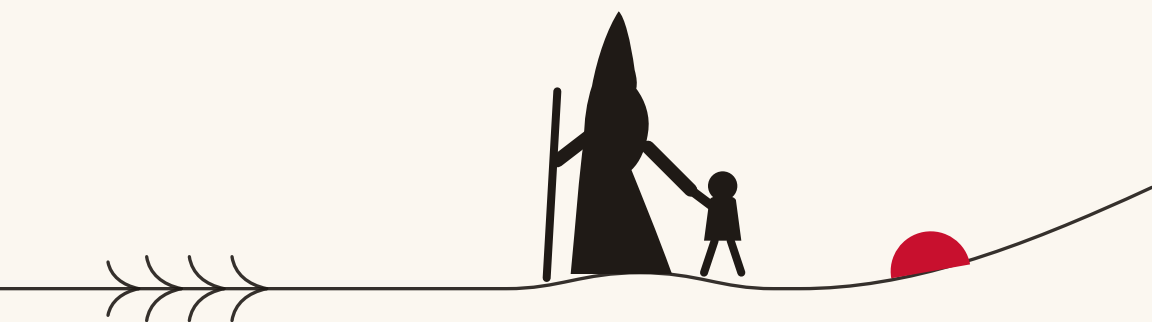


GRANDFATHER AND GRANDSON

Պապիկ եւ թոռնիկ

Mkrtich Khrimian · “Khrimian Hayrik”



ARF SHANT STUDENT ASSOCIATION

MMXXVI



Mkrtich Khrimian, "Khrimian Hayrik," 1820-1907

Grandfather and Grandson

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Mkrtich Khrimian, “Khrimian Hayrik”

Translated from the Western Armenian

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FRONT MATTER

In Memory of the Beloved Kinsman Hovhannes

Ի յիշատակ սիրեցելոյ հարազատին Յովհաննէսի

IN MEMORY OF THE BELOVED KINSMAN HOVHANNES, OF
THOSE AT REST IN THE LORD, THE MOST NOBLE GULBENKIAN
BROTHERS BADRIG, GULABI, AND HARUTIUN RAISE THIS
FUNERAL MONUMENT, *PAPIK AND TORNİK*

A MEMORIAL TO THE MOST NOBLE MR. BADRIG
GULBENKIAN

Has it fallen to me, then, to *Hayrik*¹ alone, to be the scribe of the
Gulbenkian house's memories? Never for the living, always for the
dead, who have left this world and fallen asleep in the Lord. Am I to set
their virtuous memory at the head of a book, and leave it to your
great-named family as a memorial no one will forget?

It was morning, just at sunrise. Oh, I did not know that the sun of
your kinsman, my own beloved, had already gone down. And that hour,
oh, that hour, when they brought me the black news. He is dead.
Hovhannes, the man of progress, is dead. I said, take it, Hayrik's wreath
is ready, *Papik and Tornik*.² Carry it and lay it on his grave.

The sharp axe of pitiless death has still not left the Gulbenkian
house. In a short span of time it cut down three thick-trunked cypresses,
one after another, and it never said, it is enough. Let sons stand in place
of the fathers.³

We thought death's grim officer had gone on his way, but he soon
turned back. He struck and cut down that matchless branch, newly
grafted with a marriage shoot, and from the shoot a newborn child had

budded. Oh, that merciless officer of death had no pity. He tumbled the child out of its parents' loving arms, and with one blow he felled the two newly planted plane trees, wedded to each other, Hovhannes and Arax. Had they sworn a vow, then, never to be parted, even in death?

Hovhannes did hurry on ahead, and he left his life behind him, luckless Arax. Oh, I have no more need of the world, said Arax, no more need of life, and she ran after him and was gone. I do not know whether they were laid to sleep in a single chamber in the burial ground of the Holy Savior, those two love-bound husband and wife. But I know their souls were joined in heaven.

I turn to you now and speak with your soul, my beloved Hovhannes. You gave yourself to your nation and to Hayrik at every turn. The last time, the lot fell to you to travel as a delegate to Holy Etchmiadzin, Mother See of the Armenians, and to cast your free vote in the election of the Supreme Patriarch.⁴ They tell me you carried out that duty with complete honor, and that you left your good name and your memory here among us.

I do not know what thought moved you to bring your inseparable wife Arax along, so that she might see the land of the Armenians and its Mother See, the spiritual birthplace of our Father the Illuminator,⁵ which brought a whole nation to birth, and so that she might see the Arax too, the river of paradise,⁶ whose name she was given at her baptism. It was a piece of good fortune for you both, to drink at least once the deathless water of the Yeraskh, and to keep and remember always that everlasting token of our homeland.

The Gulbenkian house mourned you. Those who loved you mourned, and so did your friends. Hayrik was your friend too, and he mourned more than any of them. He had known you from your childhood, and he knew the fine marks of your spirit. Your face was always bright and cheerful, and I read the script of your heart and spirit

like an open book, a book where a single word had been cut deep since your schooldays. That word was *progress*. If it had been nothing more than progress in this world's sciences, I would not have counted it so great a thing. What made it great was that the faith and godliness of the Gulbenkian son kept pace with it.

In the old merchant trade your fathers left you, you moved forward fearless and bold. And what was in your mind? What were you after? To grow rich, to grow great, to live in the world's splendor and simply enjoy your life? No. You wanted to grow rich only so that you could do good, for the nation, for the Church, for the enlightenment of the Armenians, and to give, always, with an open hand.

But oh, you died before your time, and the hopes you carried for the years ahead were left uncrowned. And who in this world has ever gone to the grave with his hope crowned and full? Ah, you left the Gulbenkian house a bereaved little Husik⁷ for an heir, and you went. Who knows? With the guardian Father of heaven watching over him, he may yet grow up, come into his strength, make his progress, remember his father, and crown your hope and your noble aim.

And Hayrik, from the land of Ararat, from the valley of old Aragats, from Noah's orchard on Masis,⁸ and from Mount Varag⁹ in Vaspurakan, gathers *Papik and Tornik* into a bouquet and crowns your name with it. Your memory will stay living and undying, always.

And you, kind-hearted eldest heir of the Gulbenkian family, my beloved Badrig. Take this bouquet of mine, this wreath, and carry it and lay it on your kinsman's grave. That wreath does not wither. Then go home, take the poor bereaved child in your arms, kiss him, and tell him, from now on I am your father and your guardian, and that is enough.

1. *Hayrik*, "Little Father," is the name by which the Armenian people knew the author, Mkrtych Khrimian (1820-1907), then Catholicos of All Armenians. He speaks of



himself by it throughout.

2. *Papik and Tornik*, "Grandfather and Grandson," is the title of this book.
3. An allusion to Psalm 45:16, "In place of your fathers shall be your sons."
4. In 1892 lay and clerical delegates from across the Armenian world gathered at Holy Etchmiadzin, near Yerevan, and elected Khrimian himself Catholicos of All Armenians. This was the election in which Hovhannes cast his vote.
5. St. Gregory the Illuminator (c. 257-331), apostle of Armenia's conversion to Christianity. Etchmiadzin is his see.
6. The Arax (classical Yeraskh), the great river of the Ararat plain. Armenian tradition counted it among the rivers flowing out of Eden.
7. The child's name, Husik, is a diminutive of *hoys* (yoys), "hope," a wordplay the whole sentence leans on. It is also the name of an early patriarch of Armenia.
8. Masis is the Armenian name of Great Ararat, where the ark rested and where Noah planted the first vineyard (Genesis 9:20).
9. Mount Varag, near Van, site of the monastery of Varagavank, where Khrimian had been abbot. The source prints «Վարագալ», an evident typo for «Վարագալ».



FRONT MATTER

To the Peasant People of the Armenians

Առ շինական ժողովուրդս հայոց

I wrote *Papik and Tornik*, Grandfather and Grandson, for you, and I dedicate it to your name, my dear laboring people of the plains. The Hayrik of the Armenians,¹ grown old now and turned into a *papik* himself, was glad to write it, and did not think it beneath him to play the part of a peasant grandfather for a while, as though he had been born in the village of Archak in Vaspurakan,² had worked as a plowman at the monastery of Varag,³ had gone to Bolis⁴ and back many times, and, with no schooling at all, had picked up a little knowledge just by listening and by reading books, and now passes on what he has learned to his darling *tornik*.

And what is Papik's one aim in putting this little book together for you? He wants you to read it, to learn, and to see what you are worth. He wants you to see, and at the same time to feel, how poor your life and your condition are.

You are fortunate, and you live in misery. You own a great treasure, and there is not a coin in your pocket. You are the largest landholder in the country, and you are always short of bread and always in debt. It is you who supply every necessity of life to all the townspeople of the land. From the sovereign down to the humblest townsman's table, you give the bread, you give the butter, you give the meat. You grow the stuff of their clothes too. You give the wool, you give the cotton, you give the flax, you give the silk, and much else besides that I will not stop to count here. But do you know why? Do you know the reason you are kept, always, from all those many goods of your own making? You read *Papik and Tornik*, and you will understand it well enough. The one reason is ignorance, coarseness, not knowing how to read, to write, to

reckon, to manage your own means. And what is the reason you are ignorant and stay that way? Let me tell you that too, and explain it. Listen, so that you know it and understand.

It seems to me you have become a forgotten land, as the Psalm says.⁵ You live out on the wide plains and mountains, so is it any wonder the city folk do not see you? Your back is bent so low it is level with the ground, and you work like an ant that never tires.

The townsman holds his neck high. He does not see you, and often, oh, he walks right over you, trampling, and you are crushed under his foot.

The city folk have turned into philosophers and men of letters, but they will not stoop to write books for you. Editors and agronomists, I grant you, do dedicate plenty of articles to you, so you must not complain of that. But take a villager's own son, one who through some benefactor's kindness goes off to Europe, finishes his studies, and comes home from the university. Tell me honestly, where does he go? To the city! Not so much as a first greeting, not one visit to the peasant house he was born in, or to his own parents. And suppose you ask him, sir, why do you forget your birthplace, the cradle you were swaddled in?

Look at what he answers. I come from the civilized, cultivated world. My life and my tastes are completely changed. I have light and learning. How could I possibly live among benighted, uneducated village folk who will never be able to see what I am worth? Ah, I remember our house, that hovel, and those vicious, shameless fleas that used to crucify and torture me. So our university gentleman has to live in the city and wait there until his village becomes civilized, until the benighted villagers are enlightened and their hovels turn into mansions. Then our gentleman will go back to his village. And suppose you tell him, do not wait for that long, unknown time that nobody can name. Go now, teach the village children and give them light, and bring that happy day to

your luckless village yourself. Have you no duty of your own? Remember the day you stood begging your benefactor. Send me to Europe, you said. I swear and I promise, if I come back alive, to serve my country with everything I have. But no. For the gentleman, the country means only the city, never the village.

But enough about the gentleman from the European university. His objections may sometimes be fair enough. What are we to say, though, about those gentlemen who never saw Europe at all, who stayed here in our own country, and who, after picking up the thin polish of half an education, still turn their minds and the secret longing of their hearts toward the city? Most of them, again, are villagers' sons. Is the fault in the way we teach? I do not know. Is the fault in the tutors and the teachers? I do not know. Is the fault in what the times and life itself demand? Again, I do not know. I know only this much. The moment they are let loose from the harness of school, they run for the city.

I have heard the grumbling and the complaint of more than one village father. Hayrik, he says, I gave my son up to be educated, and I wanted it badly. I wanted him to be the staff of my old age. He went, and he never came back. He forgot what a son owes his parents. Or, to say it straight, he disowned them. And all the rest of it.

This great question of education has plenty of unhappy consequences of its own. If no one thinks of a remedy and a cure, and we let it go on like this, before long we will see this sickness in our schooling open a road of emigration for our village boys, straight from the schoolroom to the city. And what becomes of us then, when the life of the greatest part of the Armenian people is the soil and the land?

Here it is, then. I looked after this for you and got it ready, *Papik and Torkik*, my dear village people, so that you will love the soil and the field your fathers gave you and never be parted from them, knowing that your life is the soil, and the just and honest earnings of working it. Read

that solemn chapter carefully, "Papik's Crowning in the Field." Papik, after wedding his Tornik with cross and Gospel, takes him out to the field and tells him, for a village bridegroom that is not enough. Now I am going to crown you⁶ a second time, to the soil and the plow-handle, to the *gutan*⁷ and to farming. You must make a vow before heaven and earth to keep this crowning unbroken. See, I set on your head this fine crown woven out of wheat stalks. Let our field hands be the witnesses, and our plow-boys, and our young buffalo and our oxen at the yoke.

Listen, Tornik. God forbid it, but if your wife Shushan dies, you can take another Shushan. But when the soil dies for you, that is, when you sell it, or let it slip out of your hands and lose the soil you inherited, then you will die too, and Shushan will die with you, and Papik's house and hearth will be pulled down.

So Papik crowned his Tornik twice over. And Hayrik in his turn sets his own crown, *Papik and Tornik*, on the head of the whole village people, and prays that you keep this crown from withering. Love your soil. Love the work of tilling it. Love learning and education, so that the sweat of your labor bears fruit. That alone will make your life better and free you from the bonds of suffering, which are the fruit of ignorance.

And one last word, and it is for you, Vaspurakan, my own country, the country I have ached for. I wrote *Papik and Tornik* for you above all, in Jerusalem, on the mount of Zion, under the shadow of the Cross.⁸ As you read it, you will see that I gathered the matter of Papik and Tornik from the flowers of the peasant people of the land of Vaspurakan. I tied them into a small bouquet, and now I give you back what is yours.

Breathe in the scent of this bouquet and you will know it at once, and you will cry *vash!*, well done. Papik of Archak is our flower. Ashugh Musho⁹ is our flower. The memorials on the *khachkars*¹⁰ of those great, great village headmen asleep in the field of the dead are our pride.

I feel very close to you. Only a five days' journey lies between us. The mountain of the Cross of Varag is hidden from my eyes. I was the Eagle of Vaspurakan¹¹ once, but now I am old and my wings are bare. If only I could be an eagle with new feathers, and fly, and climb the air, and look one last time at my ruined little nest on its high rock.

But there is no use in this longing now. What is left to me is to be near you in spirit, and in spirit to pray for you.

And what is left to you is to read *Papik and Tornik*, and to remember HAYRIK.

If I die and go down to the grave and can no longer speak to you with a living voice or with a pen, I leave you my book here, a testament and a memorial that will keep on speaking. It has one aim, that the Armenian never be parted from the soil his fathers gave him. The land of paradise is his own inheritance, which the Lord God gave to Adam our grandfather and to his heirs, telling him to till the earth and keep it.¹²

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1. *Hayrik*, "Little Father," is the name by which the Armenian people knew the author, Mkrtich Khrimian (1820-1907). *Papik* means "grandfather" and *tornik* "grandson," the affectionate diminutives that give the book its title and its two speakers.
 2. Vaspurakan is the historic Armenian province around Lake Van, in the Ottoman east, and Khrimian's homeland. Archak (Arjak) is a village district northeast of Van.
 3. Varagavank, the monastery on Mount Varag near Van, where Khrimian was abbot and kept a school and a printing press. The plowman (*machkal*) is the man who guides the plow by its handle.
 4. Bolis is the Armenian name for Constantinople (Istanbul).
 5. Psalm 88:12, "the land of forgetfulness."
 6. In the Armenian rite, marriage is solemnized by "crowning" (*psak*), so to crown is to wed. Papik's "second crowning" weds the bridegroom to the soil itself.
 7. The *gutan* is the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands, drawn by teams of buffalo and oxen.
 8. Khrimian wrote the book during his enforced residence in Jerusalem (1890-92), before his elevation to Catholicos in 1892.



9. An *ashugh* is a folk minstrel. Musho is a bard of the Van country who figures later in the book.
10. A *khachkar* is a carved memorial cross-stone.
11. *Artsvi Vaspurakan*, "Eagle of Vaspurakan," is the journal Khrimian founded in 1855 and published at Varagavank. The title became his own epithet.
12. Genesis 2:15.



CHAPTER I

The Land

U,

I.

Dear Tornik, you can see it for yourself. Your Papik has grown old, I am past seventy, and you are the only heir left to our family house. I had one son only, my firstborn, Toros, a son like no other, brave and hard-working. He kept every wheel of our household turning. When the time came I married him off, and then, God help him, two years, only two years, he stayed beside his beloved young bride. He left and went to Stambul.¹ You were born after he was gone. I sent your father a letter to tell him a son had been born to him. They baptized you, and I set down your name, Ruben. Toros your father never saw you born, never saw your swaddling clothes, never kissed your baby cheeks. When you were two or three and your tongue came loose, you called only for *mayrik* and *papik*, mama and grandpa. There was no *hayrik*, no papa, for you to see and know. What a bitter thing that is, when the mothers give birth here and the fathers hear the news far away in Stambul.

There are fathers, sometimes, who stay away abroad for ten, even twenty years, some through misfortune, some from plain lack of conscience, and never see their children's faces. Sometimes the fathers call their sons to Bolis to help them, once they have sunk so deep in the mire of exile² that they cannot climb out of it. And it often happens that some abandoned, unlucky wife, at her wits' end, sends off to Bolis the one son she has raised, the light of her eyes, and tells him, go and see what has become of your father, he has sent no letter and no money for years now.

But Toros your father was not that kind of man. He always sent letters and money on time, he honored your Papik greatly, and his heart was very tender toward his wife. And you, how he loved you, without once holding you or ever seeing you! He would send you pretty, fine clothes. Your Mayrik would dress you in them and tell you, your hayrik sent these. And you would ask, Mayrik, when is my hayrik coming from Bolis? Poor trusting little boy, you did not know that Toros would never come from Bolis. After a while a letter came from Toros, and in it he wrote, "I have fallen sick. The men of our village have carried me to the hospital." Do you not remember, Tornik, how Papik and your Mayrik wept and mourned over Toros's death? You kept asking, why are you crying, Papik, Mayrik? We would not tell you that we were crying for Toros your father, dead in Bolis.

Do you think, Tornik, that I wept only that day? No. Even now, when I am alone, the mourning and the weeping take me all over again, whenever I remember Toros's death and his memory. You do not know what old things that sweet name brings back into my mind. My great-grandfather used to tell how other Toroses had been born in our house. Every one of them died roaming far from home too, and one was driven off captive when the Persian raid came down on our village.

I will confess it to you, Tornik. That road of exile, I opened it myself, right in front of our poor Toros. He watched me go to Bolis and come back, time after time, and God gave me success, and I would come home with good money earned. But do you know how much hardship, how much bitter sweat it costs our *pandukht* brothers² to earn that money? There is one day I will never forget. Eight of us, strong porters, were carrying a huge bale slung on poles up the slope of the New Khan³ in Bolis. The sweat stood out on our foreheads and ran down in streams, pouring over our faces and soaking our bared chests. We saw Hayrik⁴ coming toward us. We set the bale down and stopped. Hayrik greeted us and asked how we were doing. I was the bold one of our company, and I

said, Hayrik, this is how we are doing. We groan, crushed under our loads, and we pour out our bitter sweat on these paving stones. I looked, and Hayrik's eyes had filled. I said to myself, to our condition, and to the sweat on our foreheads, Hayrik answers with the tears in his eyes. Yes, Hayrik gave us one short answer. My poor sons, he said, you will carry that load until you learn to read and write, until you know what your village and your soil are worth. If you poured out that much sweat working back home, you would never see the face of exile. That was all Hayrik said. He wiped his eyes and walked on. And since I could read a little, that evening I made my companions understand properly what Hayrik had meant.

This is true, Tornik, and I learned it for myself. If we work our own lands with all our heart and soul, we will live, and we will never see the face of exile. As I said, I went to Bolis and came back several times, and I brought money home in plenty. But you should know this. There was no blessing or increase in the money I earned in Stambul. I would watch it drain away in a year or two, drying up fast like the springs in autumn. What a waste! The young flower of my life was scorched and withered by the hot wind of exile, and I came to my senses too late. The last time I came back from Bolis, I had already made up my mind that the first thing I would do was go on pilgrimage to the church of the Holy Mother of God at the monastery of Archak. I got candles ready, and incense, and oil for the lamp, and I went. I went into the church, bared my head, knelt down before the altar and prayed. My heart broke in me and I wept a long time. I called on the Lady Mother of God and begged her to prosper my work, and before the altar of Christ's cross I vowed that I would never leave the village again, never abandon my house and my home, my fields and my plains.

I came out of the church with a glad heart, and courage came over me. From that moment I believed that the Holy Mother would grant my heart's desire, and that Christ would prosper some work of mine. Right

away, with the money I had brought from Bolis, I bought two buffaloes and six oxen, and fitted out a *gutan*⁵ with its full set of gear. I took off my fine broadcloth clothes and put on trousers of homespun shal. I lifted the scarlet fez with its big tassel off my head and set on the peasant's plain felt cap, the *kolos*. I pulled off my creaking city shoes (*kongosan*), put on *charukhs*, rawhide sandals, and wound the thongs. I had a ring too. That came off my finger as well, and I laid it in the chest with the fine clothes, saying to myself, let me keep it for my Tornik's wedding day. When all that was done, I hired two or three laborers besides, took up the drover's whip, threw off the European fashion, and went out to the field. I set the gutan going, and the plowing began. From that day to this I have never seen the face of exile.

So, Tornik, I gave myself to farming, body and soul. I plowed, I sowed, and God gave bread in plenty, and I have never gone short of bread. Ours is an old patriarchal house. Guests are never absent from the door, and I am the old patriarch of the house now. When I die, you take my place.

Now, dear Tornik, you are the only heir of our house and hearth, and while I am still alive I mean to give you many good and useful lessons and counsels. Do you know, I learned to read and write well enough, when I was already a grown man, at the monastery of Varag, where I worked a long while as a plowman. Later, when lessons in agriculture were given there, I listened closely, and through the idle winter season I kept working at my learning.

And in summer I learned even more, from practice. Hayrik was not only abbot of the monastery of Varag, tending the school's garden besides. He was even more a laborer of the field, because he knew that the monastery's large household and the pupils of the school all cry bread! bread! That is why he loved working the soil so much. He was always thinking about how to lighten the crushing labor of the old tillage, so that the men could get some rest, and the poor animals too,

and how the soil, worked with more care, could be made to yield more. So he would turn it over in his mind and put clever methods and devices to work. His one aim was to carry the art of agriculture at least a little way forward and improve it, so that the monastery and the school could be kept up out of what the farming earned. Apart from its landed estates, the monastery of Varag has no other property bringing in a steady rent.

Here I have to confess something to you, Tornik. As plowman of Varag's fields I learned a great deal from Hayrik's tested methods, and now, like a schoolmaster, I have to hand down to you what I learned, giving it lesson by lesson. Listen carefully to my lessons, because they matter a great deal to us. We are villagers. Our living and our life come from what farming earns and nothing else. And what earnings in this world are more just, more free, more honest than working the soil?

Clever, quick-witted Tornik, now Papik will begin his lessons. No schoolhouse is needed, no desk, no paper, no pen, no ink. Look where I am going to teach! In the house, in the stable, in the field, up on the mountains, at the springheads. At gutan-time I will hold the plow-handle and speak my lessons both at once, and you, from your seat on the yoke, will listen and hearten the team with your voice. Like the furrows opening, I will plow your mind open too. At sowing-time, *vash!* what a delight! How lovely it is. With one hand the grains of wheat, and with the other I will sow my lessons into your mind. At harvest-time, when the reapers sit down in the cool of the breeze to whet their sickles, I will sit down too, speak your lesson, and whet your blunt mind. And the threshing-floor, what a fine schoolroom that is! While you stand up on the threshing-sledge, I will swing my four-tined fork all around the floor, turning the strewn sheaves with one hand and mixing my lessons in with them. As I winnow I will part the wheat from the straw, and you, pour it in and keep it in the granary of your mind.

Now I will begin to give you the plain and easy lessons of farming, as much as I have heard and as much as I have learned for myself. Clever Tornik, give me your whole attention. Take my lessons in well and gather them up in your mind. The time has come. If your Papik dies, at least my lessons and my counsels will be left to you as an inheritance, and do you know that this inheritance is worth more than anything else? Who knows, one day you too will grow old and become a papik like me, and what you learn from me today you will hand down to your own tornik. But do not decide that Papik's few lessons are enough. You must be resourceful and inventive, and learn new things for yourself by your own work. Time drives men forward always, and you have to go forward too. You should know this. The man who lags behind goes hungry for bread. It is the land that gives us bread and every other good thing. Whoever works the land, that is, whoever labors at plowing and sowing, fills his house with bread and plenty. But the man who lets the gutan's handle drop from his hand and goes strolling about in idleness and emptiness, his house grows empty with want, bread fails in the trough and butter in the crock, and poverty comes down on him like a swift-footed courier, as the Proverb says.⁶ I will have much more to say about all this. So listen, Tornik, to Papik's lessons and good counsels, because you are going to learn what the land is, and who lives on it, the townsman and the villager. The townsman has his craft, and the villager has his farming. You will learn how these two kinds of people exchange the fruits of their labor with each other. You will learn what state our farming is in today, still stuck in the old ways, and how the old ways can be changed step by step, and the land worked by newer ones, so that our labor gets lighter, the land yields more, and our profit and earnings are doubled. And what the land yields does not benefit us alone. It benefits the state and the whole people, because the question of bread is a great one in this world, since men live by bread.

I. THE LAND

Dear Tornik, I have to begin with Adam, our grandfather. When the Lord God put our guilty forefather Adam out of paradise, He gave him one order, to work the land and keep it, and to get his bread by the sweat of his face and live.⁷

Take this well to heart, Tornik. This land we live on, this globe of earth, the Lord God has given to man as an inheritance, or say as his capital. And do you know how vast, how unfailing and inexhaustible the natural wealth of this all-abundant, ever-renewing earth is? Listen while I count it out for you. There are seas without shore or limit, and dry lands stretching out beyond measure, where millions of people and many different nations live. There are plains, mountains, valleys, glens, springs and rivers, plants of countless kinds, trees and flowers. There are the fish of the sea, the wild animals of the dry land and the tame ones, the flocks of birds, and much else besides that the Lord God created for man and gave to men, so that men could live on the earth, enjoy those good things, and bless the name of the one who made them and gave them. So men must work the land, because the land is what keeps them alive.

But do you see, Tornik, how men labor on the earth? The villager at his farming wets the furrows of his plowed field with his own sweat. The townsman at his craft pours out the same sweat. Have you seen the sweat the blacksmith sheds, standing half-naked in front of the blazing furnace, beating iron with tremendous force, forging the share for our gutan? The merchant travels over sea and land, goes from country to country, suffers, and sheds the same sweat. Even the men who govern this world sweat to govern it. From the king down to the last clerk they have the same sweat, because the mind that directs and rules has a sweat of its own, and its sleep is broken with wearing cares, while the reaping laborer lays his head on a sheaf of wheat and sleeps sweetly out in the open field, with the soft soil he worked himself for a bed. Still, between one man's sweat and another's, one man's labor and another's, the

difference is great. The farmer sheds his sweat in the field under the sun. But oh, how bitter, how hard the work is for those laborers who dig coal five hundred cubits down inside the earth, with no light and no sun, grinding away so that the steamships and the steam-carriages and all the machine-works can run without stopping.

The free laborers of our fields, who walk the meadows, stroll among the flowers of the valleys, and sit down to eat their bread at the head of a cold spring, are a thousand times happier than those men. Thank God, Tornik, that this is your lot, and that your work is sweet and pleasant.

So on this earth men of every rank and degree, some more, some less, are condemned to shed sweat, and the sentence God laid down falls without fail on all mankind. "By the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread."⁸ So men, under the sun, deep in the earth, on the dry land, on the seas, must each earn by hard labor the daily bread for himself and for his household. This is what wise Solomon means when he says, "All the labor of man is for his mouth."⁹ The man who lives only on the bread of his own sweat is a just man. The man who does no work and eats the bread of another's sweat, piling wrong on wrong, is an unjust one. And who can measure the many wrongs that are done under the sun on this earth? The wronged make up the greatest part of mankind.

And you should know this, Tornik. The man who knows no letters, who cannot read, who has no learning, who is untaught, who is one of the rough crowd, in one word the ignorant man, his life on this earth is always misery. It is the ignorant man's fate to suffer wrong forever, and ignorance itself is the greatest wrong the ignorant man bears. Though even the learned, educated man sometimes suffers wrongs at the hands of a rich and powerful ignoramus. Do not be surprised at that. There are many contrary and contradictory things in the social life of men, and seeing them we fall into doubt, and sometimes we even raise a complaint against Providence. Why are the good persecuted while the wicked prosper?

David saw this too, and laid it before God. "See, these are the sinners, and they prosper. They hold the greatness of the world."¹⁰ But enough of that question, Tornik. We have wandered from our subject. Let us begin our proper lessons.

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1. Stambul and Bolis are both period Armenian names for Constantinople (Istanbul), where villagers from the Van country went in great numbers to earn money as porters and laborers.
 2. A *pandukht* is an Armenian migrant who leaves his village to earn his bread far from home. This exile for bread (*pandkhtutian*) is one of Khrimian's lifelong themes.
 3. A khan is a merchants' inn and warehouse (caravanserai). Constantinople's great khans employed gangs of porters, very many of them Armenian villagers.
 4. *Hayrik*, "Little Father," is the name by which Armenians knew the author, Khrimian, himself. The fictional Papik here meets his own author in the street.
 5. The *gutan* is the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands, drawn by teams of buffalo and oxen.
 6. Cf. Proverbs 6:11, "poverty will come upon you like a robber."
 7. Genesis 2:15 and 3:19. Khrimian gives the verses here in his own plain Armenian, not in the classical text. He quotes the grabar of Genesis 3:19 later in the chapter.
 8. Genesis 3:19, quoted in grabar.
 9. Ecclesiastes 6:7.
 10. Psalm 73:12.

CHAPTER II

The People of the Land, Village and City

Բ. Երկրի բնակիչներ զիւղ եւ քաղաք

The people of the whole world fall into two classes, townsfolk and villagers. The townsfolk build great cities in the most favorable places and live in them. The villagers have chosen the plains, and there, building their little villages far apart from one another, they work the land and do nothing else. The townsfolk's business is craft and trade, and a small number of them also hold the various offices of the country's administration. Ask yourself, Tornik, what is the difference between townsfolk and villagers? What is better and what is worse in the life each of them leads? What is their well-being, and what is their misery?

The picture of town life and village life is a wide one. I will tell you only the main differences, the ones that show on the surface, and leave the rest for you to work out yourself. Dear Tornik, you are not shut up in the village. You go to the city and come back all the time, and you can see everything with your own eyes. And since you have had some schooling, and you have a good head, and you are grown now, you can judge and weigh for yourself both our life and the townsfolk's. Each has its sweetness and its bitterness, its well-being and its misery, its virtue and its vice. Each has many good sides and many bad ones, of many kinds. Our life is a mixture. Good and evil live together in it, the way wheat and weeds spring up and grow together.¹

To us it looks as though the townsfolk lead a very happy and comfortable life. Take the city of Van, so near to us. The handsome tall houses, the broad streets, the willows planted row after row along the edge of the waters that run murmuring down many of the streets. We go into the houses and find beautiful rooms, all patterned and painted,

filled with fine furnishings. The townsman's table is very rich, laid with sweet and savory dishes the patriarchal household prepares.

And then, Tornik, how pretty and graceful their shapely clothes look to our eyes, cut in every fashion and very costly, the men's and the women's alike. And we should not forget those rows on rows of gold necklaces that the women and the girls hang from their throats. Beyond these bodily comforts and pleasures, the townsfolk have spiritual and moral pleasures too. Their churches and the church's vestments are splendid and glorious. They have the festival ceremonies, the sweet-voiced choristers, the solemn processions and liturgies, and more than anything, the well-trained preaching *vardapets*,² who are the glory of the church and the consolation of the people.

Besides religious and spiritual consolation, the townsfolk have one more great consolation, the school, the house of learning, where their boys and their girls learn to read and write. In this the townsfolk have a very great advantage over us, because only education makes a man a man. He lets go of rudeness and coarseness, and he becomes a useful member of human society, of the state of the land, of his people and of his family. The ignorant, untaught man is just the opposite, useless and harmful to his state, his people, and his family.

What a pity, my good Tornik, that your Papik cannot make a long speech to describe and show you what knowledge is and what ignorance is. Don't you know it? Didn't your schoolmaster teach you that knowledge is light and ignorance is darkness? Didn't you read what our holy Yeghishe said,³ that as the blind man is cut off from the rays of the sun, so the ignorant man is cut off from a full life? Just as we villagers are cut off from a full life, morally and materially both. But mark this well, Tornik, and do not suppose that all the townsfolk live in the same comfort. No, do not judge it so. Most of the townsfolk have a wretched, bitter life. They earn their daily food by heavy labor. They live in the strictest poverty, without so much as a bowl of *tanapur*,⁴ and it is a great

piece of luck if they own one cow or one goat. You will see their houses, not much different from our hovels. You will see their clothes worn out and torn, and their faces without cheer or spark. Worn down all day long with the cares of the household, they go about idle and out of work, and for the most part it is their own laziness that has brought them to that state.

There are also, among the class of townsfolk, men who want to gain themselves credit by covering their inner rot and misery with outward show. They change into new clothes and newer ones, they talk of great matters, until you would take them for men of money and substance who keep a flourishing house. But go into such a house and you will find it empty even of the necessities of life. No bread in the trough, not a spoonful of butter in the crock. How do they live, then? Eh, Tornik, do not ask that. Let me make you understand it in three words, "by deceit, and sundry portions thereof."⁵ The townsfolk have some education, and in company they have a little polish, but day by day the corruptions of immoral living grow among them. Dear Tornik, I remember how it was fifty years ago. The town families were patriarchal houses, every one of them, God-fearing and reverent, lovers of the church-hour and of prayer. When the sexton went out at cockcrow to sound the call, the whole household would wake, and the men would go to church with the children. That is how the pious fathers of those days trained their sons in piety from boyhood, by their own good example. And the parents' way of teaching was nothing else. The good example counted for more than precept or word. And do you know, Tornik, one good example is worth a thousand precepts. That good time has passed and gone, and it has taken those virtuous patriarchal men with it. The present time has brought new men into the world, because every age has its own men. The world is changed now. Men love progress, only they do not yet know what the conditions, the means, and the aim of true progress are. Our townsfolk have grasped one part of progress and no more, to make money and grow rich, and however it comes about, let it come about.

The spirit of avarice and greed for gain has grown so fierce that in buying and selling every man looks only to his own profit. He makes no reckoning, and he does not know, that his neighbor's profit and his own hold together, and that men are always partners in profit with one another. But the insatiable, conscienceless spirit of gain (you would think it was the only thing alive on this earth) says, let me gain, let me grow rich, let me grow great and enjoy every pleasure in the world. What do I care if my neighbor is ruined, or lies fallen at my gate like poor Lazarus, begging for the crumbs off my table?⁶

But enough of the portrait of the profit-loving townsman, Tornik. Let us turn back to our village, because my purpose is only to speak of village life and village labor, and to show you how sweet the life of the village people is, and how great the fruits of farming are. Agriculture is the mother of every craft in this world, and the world lives by it alone, since man's food and man's life is bread. And I have said nothing yet of the many other plant products that human ingenuity prepares for the needs of our life, so many that they have neither number nor limit. I will give you a short account of all of them, taken together, in the lessons to come.

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1. The parable of the wheat and the weeds (the tares of the older English versions) is in Matthew 13:24-30. Khrimian alludes to it in ordinary Armenian, using the everyday word for darnel.
 2. A *vardapet* is a celibate priest of the Armenian Church holding the doctor's degree, licensed to preach and teach.
 3. Yeghishe is the fifth-century Armenian historian and theologian, author of the History of Vardan and the Armenian War. The sentence paraphrases him.
 4. *Tanapur* is a soup of yogurt-drink (tan) and grain, the poor man's dish.
 5. "And portions thereof" (*masamb norin*) is a liturgical tag of the Armenian Church (used of relics and the like). Papik turns it to dry humor.
 6. Luke 16:20-21.

CHAPTER III

Farming and What It Gives Us

Գ. Հողագործութիւն եւ իւր արդիւնք

Listen closely, Tornik, because I want you to understand this. Everything the people of this world eat, their very life, comes from working the land. Our wide natural land feeds us like a mother, with crops of every kind. The earth does bear fruit on its own, as Jesus said,¹ but man has to be the earth's fellow worker. The Lord God, by His bountiful work of creation, prepared seeds of every kind ahead of time, but man has his own great share of the labor. He has to plow, sow, water, and see to whatever tending is needed, so that he can reap, thresh, and gather into the granary, and afterward enjoy the fruit of his labor. So, Tornik, man's labor has to be joined to Mother Earth's own fruitfulness. But you should know something else too. The earth's own yielding and our labor can still bring nothing forth unless the bountiful will of the heavenly Father makes the sun rise over this world with its all-pervading light, and gives the clouds their order to rain on the mountains, on the plains, and on the fields we have sown. Sometimes you see it. We are the sort who remember God best when we are in trouble, and the people, with fervent and broken hearts, raise a cry toward heaven. God, send rain, rain! And the merciful God, hearing the people's voice, pours down the rain of His good will out of the clouds of heaven.

Do you see what I mean, Tornik? Heaven's sun and rain, the earth's own yielding, and our labor all join together to make ready the food that keeps the whole world's people alive, and men enjoy it and eat their fill, some more, some less. Think of the bread from the wheat we grow, the meat of the animals we raise, the fresh butter, the ghee, and the cheese, the greens we tend, the honey of our hives, the grapes and the wine of

the vineyards we plant, the fine fruit we bring on from the saplings we set with our own hands. All of it goes up as far as the king's table and dresses it with a splendor fit for a king. The rulers of the world's states and all the city-dwelling peoples enjoy it, each according to his rank and his means. And of course we too, in our own measure, enjoy the fruit of the labor of our sweat.

Set bread aside, and everything else the village people prepare for men's life and food. That is not all. Look how the same laboring people make the covering for man's nakedness, which the Lord God covered only once, with a fig leaf.² Now let me count out for you, Tornik, all the raw materials that the man who works the earth raises by his labor and hands over to the craftsman. We grow the cotton and give it to the weaver, and he makes shirts for the people. And the tailor, what a variety of flower-patterned calicoes he turns out, filling the merchants' houses of the world and the shops of the bazaars!

We plant the mulberry, and we raise that wonderful thing, the silkworm's cocoon, which passes through the merchants' hands into the hands of the silk-weaving craftsman. He makes marvelous cloth from it, and the queens of this world and the palace folk show themselves off in it like peacocks. In the old days robes of luxury like those were an honor kept for royal houses and princesses alone. But now the families of the common people dress themselves in the same purple-gleaming robes.

So much for the silkworm. And who grows the precious flax? From its seed we press the oil that lights our lamps, and sometimes make a pilaf with the oil, which is far more wholesome than the oil of the olive. And from the flax's stalk the craftsman's hand makes the finest linen, whiter than snow, one shirt's-length of which is worth a whole gold piece. But beyond linen and cotton and silk there are still other plant materials, and they are not for clothing only. From them the clever craftsman makes paper in endless quantity, for all the writers of the world and for printing. Never mind the grasses. Paper is made even out

of the wood shavings that we count worthless and burn.

But enough about food and clothing, Tornik, and all the rest that the village people's labor makes ready. Who plants the trees of the forest? Who makes ready timber beyond counting and beyond number for the houses of the world's people, and that is only on the dry land, never mind the timber for the ships that go on the sea? In the beginning, true enough, the Lord God had clothed the mountains and plains of this world of ours with self-sown forests. But the people who live on the earth have cut them down, and by now those everlasting forests of the old ages are used up. After that came forestry, an important branch of agriculture. And do you know how many new forests they raise now, by planting and tending? How I wish you had the luck, Tornik, to go to Europe and see those beautiful cedars, and the other forests of every sort, each set apart, old-planted and new-planted, which the forest-keeping laborer tends and guards. He knows how to cut the old in due season and order, and to set the new young sapling, or to sow the forest seed. And he tends it with such skill that in a few years those little seeds become great trees and cover the face of the ground. Under their shade the working laborer rests and draws a sweet untroubled sleep, and the sweet-voiced nightingales of the forest sing a lullaby over the weary laborer.

From this much alone, quick-learning Tornik, I think you can see how great and how necessary the fruits of farming are, which the laboring people supply to the city people of this world. And the city people, who receive all that enjoyment, provide in their turn for the village people's most pressing needs. So a fair exchange goes on between the two sides, and through it the peoples of this world, set apart one from another, order their lives well, the villager in the village and the townsman in the city.



1. Mark 4:28, "the earth bears fruit of itself." Khrimian gives the verse in his own plain Armenian, not in the classical text.
2. Genesis 3:7.



CHAPTER IV

The Exchanges Between Villagers and Townsfolk

Դ. Փոխանակութիւնք գիւղացւոց եւ քաղաքացւոց

Dear Tornik, you see it every day, so you can easily grasp what exchange means in our life of giving and taking. No man can meet his needs by his own labor alone, because human society lives by working together. What we have, we give. What we do not have, we take. We have many things the townsman does not have, and the townsman, just the same, has many things we do not.

Take wheat, for example, and all the other things we grow, grain and pulse and garden crops. We have sheep and cattle, milk, cheese, butter, and many other fruits of farming besides. By selling what is left over, we buy the things we need, and they are few, because the wants of village life are simpler and plainer. For our clothes, *shal* wool and linen are enough. For the household, Van calico, red linen and the local *manisa* used to be enough, though nowadays even Europe's shoddy printed *basmas*¹ and broadcloths are not considered enough.

Ah, Tornik, the times have changed. Village families have developed a taste for things, just like the townsfolk. The glittering finery of town households is a real temptation to our plain-living families. But village people must do everything they can to hold on to their plainness and their frugal way of life, because a villager has to live within his station. I will come back to this in a lesson of its own.

Apart from clothing, what a villager most needs for his work are the iron tools, which the town craftsman makes and we buy with money. The share of our *gutun*,² the scythe and the sickle for mowing, and the other important iron things we cannot do without, all of these the

blacksmith gets ready for us.

Go ahead and ask me straight out, Tornik. Couldn't the villager see to all his own needs himself? Good for you, Tornik, long life to you! That is a very shrewd question. What you want is a villager who never has to depend on the townsman. Yes, it looks easy enough. Just let the villager learn to read and write the way the townsfolk do, let his mind open, let him learn to think and move forward in his own measure. Then he will work it out for himself. He will place a few quick-witted boys as apprentices with the town blacksmith. In a short time they learn the trade well, come back to the village, open a smithy, and make the tools that are needed, and not just for their own village but for the villages around it too. But leave that aside. We can make our plain clothing too, since the villager has wool and cotton. It is true that our Van country does not succeed at growing cotton, but Mush, Yerznka, Kharberd and many other provinces have done fairly well with it. And cotton will not run short for the villagers of Van either. It comes in great quantity from the nearby Persian border, and a man of Van can buy it, spin it and weave cloth from it. Better still, though, the villager can make his own clothes by weaving *shal* stuffs from his own wool. In winter especially, when the field work stops, he can weave *shal* and keep busy with the other crafts that are important and useful to village people.

It hurts me deeply, Tornik, that our villagers of Van and of Mush lead such an idle, workless life, above all in the villages around the city. Their men go into town in droves, hang around the wine-houses for days at a time, and turn into drunkards and sots. I am not saying the working villager should be denied that pleasure, when the townsman takes far more of it. And do you know how much wine there is? The vineyards of all Van and of the villages around it yield close to two hundred thousand *litras*³ of wine, and the merry, wine-loving people of Van drink every bit of it. And what else are they going to do but drink

it? By the next year it has turned to vinegar. The vine-keepers do not know the craft of wine-making, and even if they did, it would still come to nothing, because they cannot turn the wine to profit. They have no way to carry it anywhere. The sea is far away, and the roads are rough and unbuilt. By the provident care of the state, roads have been built and leveled from city to city in many provinces of Turkey, and the trade of those provinces grows day by day. We hope our provinces will have the same good fortune. Then not just the wine but the fruits of the land as well may be carried down to the harbor of Trebizond.⁴

There, dear Tornik, in answering your question the talk ran on and carried me into other things. But let me come back to your question and explain a necessary law of the world's economy, the law that binds human society together through trade and mutual gain. What you want is for the villager to meet all his needs by his own labor and never have to buy anything from the townsfolk.

Ah, Tornik, this is where you go wrong. That idea is nothing but a child's wish, and it goes against the whole of human society, against its moral union and its common interest. You need to understand this. Human society lives by each part depending on the other. What one lacks, the other supplies, and everything in this world runs on exchange. How do you picture it? You carry your wheat to town, sell it, and head home without buying a single thing at the market? Only sell, and never buy? A trade like that is deeply wrong and unjust. At a single stroke it would rob the merchants and the craftsmen both, and shut the door on their livelihood. Just as you live by selling wheat and the other fruits of your farming, the merchant lives by selling his goods. Most of a province's people are villagers. If the villager cuts off his trade with the city, can the city's people live? And can the village people live if they do not sell what they grow to the townsfolk, or, when they are hard pressed, turn to a friend in town for a loan? Who doesn't know that the villager's treasury is the city? The poor villager, even with the whole



crop of his farming, still cannot cover his needs and his debts and pay the state's taxes when they come due. So he is always driven to go to the moneyed townsman and ask for a loan.

I will come back to this, Tornik, and you must take it in and be convinced of it. The city lives by the village and the village by the city. That is an established law of the world's economy, and whole nations and peoples are governed by it.

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1. *Manisa* was a striped cotton cloth named for the town of Manisa in Asia Minor, and *basma* was cheap printed calico. These were the everyday cloths of the bazaar.
 2. The *gutun* is the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands, drawn by teams of buffalo and oxen.
 3. The *litra* is an old measure of weight and capacity used in the Van country.
 4. Trebizond (Trabzon) was the Black Sea port through which the trade of the Armenian provinces passed toward Constantinople and Europe.



CHAPTER V

The State of Our Farming Today

Ե. Վիճակ մեր արդի հողագործութեան

Do you see it, my sharp-eyed Tornik? The farming of our village people still lies in the swaddling-bands of antiquity. We are still wandering in the old, old centuries. Every task of our farming is a torment of bitter sweat, and the tools we work with are rough, artless, crudely made things that torture not only us but, far more, our poor dumb animals.

Look, here comes the village laborer in from the field, his cart piled with sheaved wheat. He has yoked a pair of strong buffaloes and a pair of oxen, and they drag the cart with such difficulty that half an hour's road takes them a full hour to the threshing-floor. The heartless carter drives the poor buffaloes on with the drover's whip, crack on crack. Tongues hanging out, breathless, snorting, they haul. Come closer, Tornik, and look at that crude, monstrous cart. Measure its length and its width. The whole thing turns in one piece with the axles, and the wheel-block riding on the axle, if we weigh it together with its wheels, comes to more than a hundred *litras*,¹ because it is built entirely of hard elm, the heaviest wood there is. So the cart is an enormous load in itself, and on top of that load they pile a hundred and fifty sheaves of wheat and more.

It is a great comfort to me, Tornik, that you can now see the village people of Van beginning to use the light carts of Karin,² which make things so much easier for the farmer.

Come along, they are plowing a field just over there, and I will show you Adam's *gutan*.³ Look at it, one thick, crook-backed beam of ash-wood, more than three cubits long. The villagers of Van call it the *esh*, the donkey, and it drags every bit as slowly as one. To the back end

of this donkey-beam the share-head is joined, and over its head they have fitted the iron share. The gutan of Van breaks the ground with one pair of yoked buffaloes and three pairs of oxen, and the furrows it opens are barely a big span deep. But let me tell you, Tornik, if you saw the gutans of the plain of Mush, of Alashkert, and of the Ararat country, you would be appalled. Nine pairs of fighting buffaloes and oxen can barely work that crude gutan, and the furrow it opens is not much different from the furrow of ours. Several houses of a village have to join together just to yoke a single gutan. Compared with those, our gutans in the villages of Van are far more refined, because our gutan-joiners are very skilled. With the plumb-line they set the gutan so true that at times it walks the line without swerving and opens its furrow. But set it beside the plow of Europe, and our gutan falls behind. Yoke one pair of buffaloes to the European plow, or two pairs of oxen, and it breaks the ground with perfect ease, even unbroken fallow, while our gutan needs four yoke to work it. And do you know, Tornik, what a saving it is in the labor of plowing when we can plow with two yoke instead of four? And how welcome, how profitable that is, above all for the village households that do not own many draft cattle.

I am very glad, Tornik. I heard of it, and I went and saw it myself. There is a skilled and inventive joiner in Van, Usta David⁴ they call him, who builds plows exactly on the European pattern. There is another craftsman too, a blacksmith named Aleksan, who makes the iron parts of the plow. You only need to show him a model. The villagers around Van have now begun to use that plow, and the price is very low. A plow can be built for three gold pieces. And do you know what a relief it is for a villager, Tornik, to buy his plow ready-made? I know the poor villager. For a gutan, for a cart, for the various other timbers his farming needs, he leaves his work in the field and spends days wandering the tree-gardens of Van looking for suitable wood, and then he is forced to pay a heavy price for it.

If only a workshop opened in Van. If only the skilled joiners and the ironworkers formed a modest company and made in that workshop all the tools that farming needs. Not just the gutan but small plows too, and light carts whose axles turn inside the wheels, and all the gear that belongs to the threshing, the threshing-sledge, the *jarjar*⁵ and the rest, the *manker*,⁶ the leveling-drag, yokes, and so on. Then you would see, Tornik, what a relief it would be for the farming people. And how well that little company would do, able to supply not just the villagers of Van but the neighboring provinces as well, since the lake of Van makes it so easy to carry farm tools across. If this venture succeeds and the old tools are traded for new, the land's yield will go far forward, and the increase will be doubled, not just for the subject people but for the revenue of the state too, because the flourishing of the land's farming is the wellspring of the state treasury's wealth.

So, Tornik, we must put away the old tools, and with them the old ingrained prejudices, and take up the new tools that craft keeps inventing. For people who have never been taught, that is hard enough. But when people see a working example with their own eyes, the ease of the labor and the profit and earnings that come with it, they take heart at once and set about trying it and learning it. Or do you think our village folk are so dull and stupid that they would see their own profit right in front of their eyes and not lift a hand to take it?

Listen, Tornik, and let me tell you a little story, so you can be sure of this. Whatever brings a profit, people will fight to snatch it out of one another's hands.

The story goes that a Frenchman brought a good quantity of potatoes over from America into France for seed, planted a field of them, and got a great yield. Since his aim was to spread the growing of that useful plant through France, he wanted to give the potatoes from his own field away to the people for nothing. The people thought nothing of it, and perhaps even laughed at him. Now watch what the

ingenious farmer does. He asks the government for constables and sets a guard over the potato field. But he secretly instructs the constables that if men slip into the field to steal, the guards are to pretend not to see, and to let them. People see there are guards over the field, and so they say, there must be good things to eat in there. They begin slyly stealing the potatoes. At first they eat them raw, and then they boil them, and they find it is an excellent thing. It tastes like egg, and it nourishes a man well. And that is how the growing of the potato spread, not just through France but through the whole of Europe, and in a time of famine it is a food that saves the people.

Did you see, Tornik, what a masterly trick the clever Frenchman played? He spread his discovery through the whole country of France by the hands of thieves. And not France alone. Today the whole of Europe is busy growing potatoes, and after wheat it is counted the most necessary food there is.

How good it would be if our farming people followed this example too and learned to grow that profitable plant, which yields thirty and forty for one. Then, whenever the wheat crop failed, the potato crop would fill its place, and people would be spared the bitter scourge of famine.

Now that I have talked about the tools of the field, do you know, Tornik, that there are living tools as well, and more important ones? Our yoke-bearing working animals, which grow wearier than we do in the heaviest labor of the fields. But we need to know which of them suits the work best, the ox, the buffalo, or the horse. We usually use the ox and the buffalo, and experience shows us that the gentle-natured ox suits the work better than the buffalo, and makes it far easier.

The buffalo brings the laborer a great deal of trouble and difficulty, above all at the start of spring, when the animals come out of the winter stable grown fat and full of strength. It takes some weeks to tame those

fierce, furious creatures before you can bring their proud necks under the yoke. Have you seen what the laborers do to reconcile fighting buffaloes with one another? They have come up with a method so stupid and so brutal that no soft-hearted man can bear to watch the fight. They lead two fighting buffaloes out into the open field and let them go, and then you see with what force head crashes against head, with a tremendous crack. Sometimes the fight ends with one of them taking the first blow, seeing his own weakness, and bolting. Sometimes the two are evenly matched and neither will give way, until one of them has a leg broken or a horn torn out by the root. There is a strange law among these fighters. Once one has proved himself the victor and the other has run, they are at peace with each other from then on, and quietly, side by side, they go under the yoke.

Let us not be surprised, Tornik, that the ignorant villager seals the terms of his buffaloes' peace this way. Isn't the world's law of peace just the same?

But leave that. There is another kind of labor and hardship in keeping the buffalo. Sturdy and thick-hided as buffaloes are, they are actually very delicate and need a great deal of tending. They can bear neither cold nor heat. On a summer day you have to wash them several times, and even in winter you must at least wash them now and then and rub them with oil. And do you know how hard it is to control the buffaloes that never grow tame, the ones that always want to fight and disturb the peace of the others? A laborer has to give himself to such a beast alone and keep guard over it. The villager has just one trick for handling these unruly fighters, and they obey at once. And sometimes the villagers even count it a great boast to own fighting buffaloes, because the peasant folk have their vanity too, in their own measure. How proud our brother Toros is when his buffalo beats the buffalo of Kirakos! And then look at the fight between Toros and Kirakos themselves, above all when some harm has come to the beaten buffalo, a

leg broken or a horn knocked off. What comes of it is a grudge, or revenge taken on one another.

It seems to me, Tornik, that it is the heavy, unbearable tools of the field that have given the villagers their reason for using buffaloes at all. Once the tools grow light and easy, there will be no more need of the buffalo. Yes, in the business of stock-raising the buffalo has his uses too, for his hide and his meat. And then there is the horn, out of which the European with his skill makes all sorts of things, handles for knives and clasp-knives, and buttons, while our oil-seller measures out his oil with a horn. And that is the whole of his usefulness.

So it is best, Tornik, that the villagers come to see this and learn to use the ox instead for the steady work. The ox is very easy to keep, summer and winter alike. He needs neither washing nor oiling. It is enough to scrape his back with a currycomb and keep him clean. But the breed of the oxen must be improved, like the oxen of the province of Alashkert, which are splendid and huge. The oxen of our own province of Van are very stunted and weak, and I will explain the reasons for that in their place.

But let me tell you this too, Tornik. Over buffalo and ox alike, the horse has an enormous advantage, if only we knew how to use him in our farm work and could manage it. The villager will laugh, perhaps. He has never seen it, and he cannot believe that the whole world of Europe uses only the horse for its farming, though it keeps oxen beyond counting, and those only for the meat and the hide. Let me tell you the horse's qualities. First, the horse's chest has twice the strength of the ox's neck. Second, the horse is far faster at the work. Figure it this way. If a plow yoked with ox and buffalo opens fifty furrows in a day, the horse-plow will certainly open seventy furrows and more. And for hauling the cart and treading out the sheaves, nothing compares with the horse.

But will the villager ever be persuaded to give up his old inherited system and custom? Yes, Tornik, he will. And yet the villager is in the right too, so long as schooling and the times lend him no hand. Beyond everything else there is his deep-rooted prejudice. Pulling that time-hallowed notion out of his mind takes schooling, and plenty of time.

But should we wait until he is schooled and his mind accepts the new progress? No. As I said before, we must show the village people by working example. Let them see with their own eyes. A man who cannot read or write struggles to grasp a thing in his mind, but through the sight of his eyes and a plain example he grasps it quickly, and the profit of the work drives him to follow the example. In the ages of the old world, when there was no writing, no school and no learning, men learned everything, every craft, from one another by the practice of the eye. Even now our Eastern world learns the plain crafts that same way, smithing, for instance, tailoring, shoemaking, joinery and the rest. The Western world, which has gone ahead of us, first teaches those crafts as lessons in a school, in theory, and when the pupil comes out of the school, he picks up the practical work in the workshop very easily.

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1. The *litra*, an old measure of weight and capacity used in the Van country.
 2. Karin is the Armenian name of Erzurum.
 3. *Gutan*, the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands, drawn by teams of buffalo and oxen.
 4. *Usta* means master craftsman in Turkish.
 5. *Jarjar*, a threshing implement drawn over the strewn sheaves, counted with the threshing-sledge among the gear of the threshing-floor.
 6. *Manker*, the heavy toothed harrow-beam of the Van country, on which the driver stands as the team drags it. It is described in the next lesson.

CHAPTER VI

Plowing and Sowing, and the Other Labors of Tillage

Զ. Վարուցան եւ մշակական այլ աշխատութիւնք

Now that I have said enough about the laborer's tools, Tornik, I will start on the plowing and the sowing and the other kinds of work. Our village people of Van plow the ground in two ways. If the ground is unbroken fallow, they plow it with the *gutan*.¹ If it was plowed last year and the soil is loose, they use the light plow, the *haror*, yoking one pair of buffaloes or oxen. The light plow mostly comes out around springtime, for sowing barley and other grain. Sometimes at the end of April, when spring comes early, and sometimes from the middle of May, they set the *gutan* going. The first round they call the milk-plowing, when the soil is soft and plows easily. After that it hardens little by little, and great clods come up as you plow. That is why our villagers hurry to yoke the *gutan* early, so the milk-plowing season does not slip past them. But on the shore of the sea of Van, the districts of Artske and Arjesh² plow their ground a different way, and a more fruitful one. They call that way of farming *dir*. They break their ground twice. The first time, at the beginning of spring, they plow deep with the light plow and drag it level, and it lies like that until the beginning of autumn. Then they plow it a second time, again with a kind of light plow that has two boards fastened behind its share, a cubit and a half long and a span wide, standing open a finger's breadth along their whole lower length. The seed-man walks behind this plow and drops the seed in small handfuls between the boards, the grains fall neatly into the furrow, and the soil from both sides of the furrow falls in and covers them. You should see how handsome they look when they sprout, coming up out of the furrow in a straight line. In a good year they yield twenty and twenty-five for one. The farmers there save on the seed as well. Where

we sow one measure, they sow half a measure, and every grain they sow comes up, while a third of the grain sown our way is lost, as I will tell you in its place. The harvest of these two districts is so abundant that it fills the land of Vaspurakan³ with wheat. In any year when their harvests fail, that is the sign that a shortage of bread is coming. Now that I have written this much about the farming of Arjesh and Artske, let me turn back, Tornik, and go on with the order of our own.

The milk-plowing does not last long. After a few weeks the fields still waiting to be plowed start to harden, and then you should see how hard the gutan has to work to cut its furrows, and what big stubborn clods lie lump on lump along them. Our villagers still do not know the easy remedy for this, but the man of Kharberd⁴ knows it well. The fields that have grown hard and stiff, he waters first and plows afterward, and then no clods form at all, since at gutan-time the water is still plentiful.

How good it would be, Tornik, if we followed that example too, set up an order, watered the hardened fields one after another, and plowed them that way. Do you see how it pays twice over? The field plows easily and throws up no clods, and the water also gives the soil strength and adds to its growing power. And there is more. When a field is sown while the plowed ground is full of big clods, part of the seed falls under those rough clods and is lost. Another part washes away when the field is watered. Add in how many grains the waterman's foot carries down the slope, and then, when nobody has picked over the seed, the thin and profitless grains never sprout either. Put all that together, and of one measure of seed-wheat barely half comes up. The other half is lost.

We also have to count the watermen's day-wages, which run much higher for fields like these, above all where they water the sown ground without drawing the guide-furrow, the way they do in the fields of the townsfolk around Van and of other villages. On this point I am very glad, Tornik, that our Archak villagers are well practiced at drawing the guide-furrow. Our fields are level, so one waterman does the work that

would otherwise take four. He can let a whole millstream of water into a field and still keep it under control.

The clods of the plowed ground bring one more dreadful hardship, and it comes when the laborer harrows with the *manker*⁵ after the sowing. You have seen the manker. It is a thick beam of hard, heavy elm, four cubits long, with ten or more wooden teeth set in a row along it, and the laborer stands on it, holding one end of a rope whose other end is tied to the yoke. There, they are harrowing a sown field. Come and see it with your own eyes, Tornik, so you will believe me that of all the work of the fields the manker is the most dreadful. Watch how it slams into the great clods and grinds over them, now leaping and flung forward, now stopped dead head-on by the biggest clods of all. And the pitiless laborer's whip drives it on again, until at last the dumb young buffaloes, in torment beyond describing, finish the manker's work.

Ask me, Tornik, how this unbearable part of the work can be made easier. I said above that one way is to water the fields left over after the milk-plowing and plow them afterward. There are other devices too, which the ingenious European has invented for the very purpose of breaking up the clods in the fields. But what good is that to us? Our poor village people have no way to get hold of such tools. Better that we think up ways of our own, with our own natural wit.

Here is what I say, Tornik. Why should our gutan-work drag on so long that the last fields harden before we reach them? Since the new plow works with two yoke, the answer is simple. We yoke two plows, do forty days' work in twenty, and finish our spring plowing within the milk-plowing season.

But take the fields we plow this year. If we let the winter pass over them, in spring you will see that the snow and the frosts have crumbled the clods to flour. Plow them over again with the light plow at the beginning of autumn, then sow them, and they come up far more

fruitful.

I have heard something about this, so let me tell you, Tornik. They say that VIRGIL, in his poem about farming, gave the Romans this advice. I have kept the lines in my mind.⁶

"But the plowman's greedy wish
that fallow ground shall fill
which twice has borne the scorching heat
and twice the winter frost."

Let me explain it to you. The plowed field that satisfies the farmer's desire is the one that has stood twice against the summer heat and twice against the winter frost. Two summers of heat bake the soil better, and a second winter breaks the clods of earth apart and crumbles them.

Are you going to say, Tornik, I am the one who comes from school, and you are the one quoting Virgil? Ah, Tornik, a few years of sitting in a school and you imagine you know as much as Papik. I have been learning for fifty years now, by listening, by watching, and by trying. I never went to school the way you have. But the things of the world and the people of the world are my school, and I am learning still, at my age, while you, fresh out of school, think you know everything. You have a lot of bread to eat yet before you know as much as Papik. Your Papik has a good memory. Who knows how many years ago it was that Hayrik⁷ explained those lines of Virgil to his pupils, and I listened, and kept them in my mind.

If only we could farm our fields the way the old Romans did! Virgil's advice teaches us this. The soil has to be turned more often, because the more the soil is turned over, bottom uppermost, the more fruitful it becomes. Then the soil bakes evenly in the sun, and the soil underneath is not left raw. In cold climates above all, this matters a great deal. The villagers of Van know nothing about it and have never tried it, while the village people of Kharberd, of Karin, and of Basen⁸ know better and

have more practice. They never begrudge the labor. They plow their once-plowed field over with the light plow twice, three times, even four times, to turn the soil. Food stirred on the fire cooks evenly, and in the same way the clever villager has learned by experience that the more the soil is turned and aired in the sun, the more growing strength it gathers. That quickening strength passes into the seed sown in it, and the field bears twice and three times the fruit.

But ask me, Tornik, why the villagers of Van plow their field only once and do not follow the proven example of the other provinces. The reasons are very plain, Tornik, and I want to give them to you in full, because this lesson is the weightiest of all my lessons.

You can see, Tornik, that our land of Vaspurakan is very wide. It has pasture-plains in plenty, mountains, valleys, glens, and soil fit for the plow, and water in abundance too. So our village people are very rich in land, and every house holds great allotments of it, portioned out to each family by the old village law and according to the crown registers.

But now look at this, Tornik. The peasant folk are greedier for land than I can tell you. Just as the rich treasure-holders of this world will heap up gold mountain-high and still not say "enough," so the farming folk, however much land they hold, never say "that will do." They are never filled. They are always after more land. If a house has twenty or thirty fields, look at the villager's reckoning. He says to himself, every year I will sow ten fields and leave the rest fallow, so that they will yield more. There is the first reason, his greed. And the pity of it is that our villagers know only one way of strengthening a field, which is to leave it fallow. His mind is dull. It never occurs to him that there are many other ways of fattening the soil. Never mind what science teaches. He does not even know the use of the dung heaped pile on pile in front of his own door and all through the village. And there is more. Along with the greed for land, our farming people have a fierce craving to plow much, to sow much, and to take a great yield. The poor man is no economist

and no arithmetician. He cannot work out that once the labor is multiplied, the costs multiply with it. Let me count them out for you, Tornik. The labor of plowing, the labor of sowing, the punishing labor of the manker, the labor of watering in autumn and in summer, the labor of reaping, the labor of carting from field to threshing-floor. And on top of all these labors, pile the day-wages of the laborers. Strangest of all, the farmer who is master of the house never puts the labor of his own household and his own children into the account at all.

If the villager thinks this way and acts this way, it is no wonder, Tornik. But what about the monastic brothers of our Armenian monasteries, who can read and write, and who have wide lands to farm? They have no advantage over the village folk at all. Their farming runs on the same wit and in the same fashion. It was their duty, at the very least, to move the work of the fields some little way forward, and set an example for the villages of their diocese. Though it has to be admitted that to this day there has never been a standing monastic council for the monasteries, one that could set an order and give direction.

But enough of all that. Have you understood our villagers' principle, Tornik? He always wants to spread his plowing and sowing wider, and that does great harm. He does not know how to pull it in, and he will not, though pulling it in is exactly what would let him farm his soil well. Instead of working ten fields with backbreaking labor, isn't it better and more profitable to work five fields only, and work them well, so that the five yield as much as the ten? That way both the labor and the cost come down sharply.

Do not tell me, Tornik, that Papik is contradicting himself, that when the labor of ten fields is heaped onto five, what with double-plowing them, what with dunging them and all the other work, the labor comes out the same in the end. No. It is not the same. There is a great difference between farming spread wide and farming drawn in. The labor differs in kind, in how long it lasts, and above all in how much

easier it is. I do not need to explain it in detail. You will see it and learn it in the doing.

Now ask me, Tornik. If we are content to work five fields only, and work them well, must the other five lie untilled and useless? I will write about that in its own place. For now let me say just this much. Is there any shortage of things a villager could sow? Let him grow grass. Let him sow lucerne, sow sainfoin, sow oats (*yulaf*), sow potatoes, sow turnips, sow beets, sow beans, sow lentils, sow onions, and melons, cucumbers, watermelons, and many other things besides, all of them things our life needs. And what a waste it is that the villagers of Van are used to sowing wheat, barley and millet and nothing else, and think the other, most useful crops are beneath their notice.

That ends the lesson on working the soil. Now I will talk about choosing the seed, which for a good farmer matters as much as anything.

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1. *Gutan*, the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands. The *haror* is the light one-yoke plow used on soft ground.
 2. Artske (Adilcevaz) and Arjesh (Erciş), districts on the northern shore of Lake Van, "the sea of Van."
 3. Vaspurakan, the historic Armenian province around Lake Van.
 4. Kharberd is Harput.
 5. *Manker*, the heavy toothed harrow-beam of the Van country, ridden by its driver to break the clods.
 6. Virgil, Georgics I, 47-48. The field that answers the greedy farmer's prayers is the one that has twice felt the sun and twice the frost. Papik quotes it in a classical Armenian verse rendering, then puts it into plain speech for the boy in the paragraph that follows.
 7. *Hayrik*, "Little Father," Khrimian himself, abbot of the monastery of Varag near Van, in whose school Papik heard the lessons (see Chapter I).
 8. Karin is Erzurum. Basen is the Passin plain east of Karin.

CHAPTER VII

The Choosing of Seed and the Sowing

Է. Սերմի ընտրութիւն եւ սերմանացան

Pay close attention, Tornik. Let me first describe to you, briefly, what these small-grained seeds are, and what great hidden powers they carry. The Lord God prepared them wondrously, once and for all, at the creation of this world, and wrote them into the womb of mother earth. It amazes a man, how the grains conceive, and sprout, and come up out of the soil, and grow day by day until they are as big as a tree, as Jesus says in his parable about the mustard seed, which grows so big that the birds come and rest in its branches.¹

Do you see? The whole globe of our natural earth is full of seed sown by God's creating hand. All the forests, all the fruit trees, the flowers, the grass, the different garden plants, everything that grows, has come up out of grains of seed. So give glory to God, and kiss his providing hand in your spirit. He gave man this earth as an inheritance, as capital that never runs out, and along with the earth he gave the seeds of every sort and kind. If he had given only a dry and barren earth, with no seed in it, what would have become of man? He could not have lived at all, because our food and our life are what the earth grows from seed.

We do not know, Tornik, at what point in time man, with his ingenuity, chose the seed of wheat over everything else for his food. He sowed it and reaped it. At first he boiled it in water and ate it as grain, but later, with his inventive wit, he ground it in the quern and it became flour. From the flour he kneaded dough, shaped it into little rounds, baked it on the fire, and it turned out to be excellent bread. Today the greater part of the whole world lives on bread, and if the bread runs out, a man starves. There are, though, lands and peoples that do not live on bread, and it is a strange thing, because if they eat bread it does them

harm. They eat rice instead of bread, and live on other things. It seems a man can live on whatever he is used to, the way the forest savages live on fruit and the meat they hunt. That is all I need to say in general about the seeds that were prepared for us from the beginning. And do you see, Tornik, how our daily life hangs on seed, and above all on the bread-grain? Now I have to talk about choosing that precious seed, because everyone knows that other, alien seeds get mixed in with the wheat, stepchildren, self-sown offspring of the mother soil, which come up without ever being sown or tended, the tare, the *chllek*,² and the rest. The sowing laborer must not only separate those alien seeds from the wheat, he must pick out the thin and shriveled grains too, sifting and cleaning again and again until only clean grains are left, plump and full.

As for the sowing itself, the farmers of Europe today have invented various clever machines that sow very evenly, so the grains fall in the field at an even distance from one another, come up evenly, and take an equal share of nourishment from the mother soil.

Doesn't it astonish you, Tornik, that trial and skill have worked out how much soil a single grain needs, to feed it and keep it alive until harvest?

But it is plain that fields which have gathered strength lying fallow, or have been fattened with dung, can take and hold much more seed, just as a rich man can keep many children in plenty. So the experienced farmer, who knows exactly where his field is strong and where it is weak, sows his seed accordingly, thick or thin, and he is right to do it. Can a mother with no milk feed two children instead of one? We can set the sowing machine aside, Tornik. For us, at least, it would be very hard to use right now. The hands of our seed-casters are skilled enough for the sowing, and the handful is their measure. When a man wants to sow thick he fills his fist full, and when thin he tightens his fist and holds it in.

Ah, Tornik, something has just come to my mind. Let me tell it to you. There was a time when the village people were very devout. At sowing-time a man would first carry his seed to the village priest to be blessed, and only then begin to sow. Blessed be the Fathers of our ancient church, they did not forget this either. They composed a prayer for the blessing of the seed too, in the order of the Mashtots.³ I have often had our priest bless the seed for me, and reading the prayer he would say, "Bless, O Lord God, the seed and the sower. You are bountiful in your gifts, and you give seed to the sower,"⁴ though without seed you can bring bread out of the earth, and without food fill the hungry," and so on. Our forefathers were simple-hearted like that, and full of faith. Seed, field, granary, vineyard, wine-press, every crop and every fruit, they had them all blessed, and they set aside the tithe-portion for the priest, and for the monasteries as well.

But leave the blessing of the seed. If I tell you the rest, Tornik, you will be amazed at the devout fervor of the master of the house at his sowing. From the day the sowing began, he did not come home from the field again. He slept out under the open sky, and his bed for the night was the furrow of his own field, until the sowing-time was finished. You should have seen how he began. First he pulled his belt tight. Then he took up handfuls of the seed and poured them in at the open breast of his shirt, filling his bosom on both sides right up to his armpits. Then he made the sign of the cross on his face and began to sow the field. The work of sowing lasted twenty and thirty days, long enough for the grains in the sower's bosom to sprout, because the sun beat on his bare chest and warmed them, and from within, the laborer's sweat wet them like dew and drew out their shoots. And this was taken as a good omen for the fruitfulness of the sown fields. You know, Tornik, that at plowing-time there are the calls that hearten the yoked animals. In just the same way, the sower has the murmurs of his own mysterious prayer.

I am sowing, my God.
You send the rain, and send it in plenty,
so the dry grains sprout from the soil
and my fields dress themselves in green, in green,
and swell, and set their ears,
full-bodied wheat, red in the grain.
I ask you, Lord, give me for one
thirty, and sixty, and a hundred,⁵
so that first I can pay my state
the tithe that is its rightful due,
and then pay the man I owe
his interest, heavy upon heavy,
and then the village church,
and a share for the poor as well,
and what is left over, that alone
is my family's bread and keep,
and the guests' who come and go,
who eat and carry bread away for nothing.
This is the law of our land,
handed down from our forefathers.
The peasant's door stands open,
his bread and his table always ready.

Do you see, Tornik, how many portions the fruit of our labor goes into? But never let that discourage you. The more the portions, the more abundantly God gives. The farmer's earning is blessed with fullness and does not run out, so long as the farming people, under the protection and care of the state, can work their land in quiet and in safety and make it yield by their tireless labor. And the state knows very well that the great spring of its treasury rises out of the working people's field. The better that people is sheltered under the state's outspread wings, the fuller that spring will flow.

Let me not forget, Tornik, a little more about the season and the timing of the sowing. Sowings commonly fall in two seasons, spring and autumn, which is to say April and September. In our province of Vaspurakan, and likewise in Upper Armenia,⁶ in Alashkert, and in some of the high-lying districts of Mush, spring generally comes late, and sometimes drags on into May, so the spring sowing does not do well, because the rainy weather has passed by then. It is a great piece of luck for the farmer if spring comes early and he can finish the spring sowing within March or at the beginning of April, while the rains are not yet over, so the seed, already in the ground, can come up quickly and gather strength.

Our farmers have no great hopes for the spring sowing, so they sow little of it. The greatest part of the sowing is always the autumn sowing, which usually begins in the middle of August and goes on until October, and sometimes past it. It is best for the plowed fields to be sown from September on. It has been proved that the fields sown first do better. They shoot and come up quickly, take root, and gather strength while the sun's strength has not yet slackened. They green well until the snow comes at the end of autumn and covers them, and as soon as spring arrives the wheat-stalks grow and rise and set their ears. After some three months, in the first days of July, the sickle goes into the harvest, because the autumn-sown seed ripens earliest of all, and the spring-sown is the last harvest of all.

Besides the spring sowing and the autumn sowing there is one sowing more, which they leave to the very end of autumn. They sow it when winter is nearly on them and the ground is freezing, so the grains of seed neither shoot nor come up but simply lie in the soil without growing. The moment spring arrives they come up at once, ahead of the spring-sown, since they are already sown and ready, the seed softened and shot, while the spring sowing, what with the rains and the weather, does not come up quickly every year.



I think that is enough, and I will write no more about the choosing of seed and the sowing. Now I will talk about water, and about the watering of the fields, which is one of the necessary means to a plentiful crop.

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1. Matthew 13:31-32.
 2. *Chllek*, a field-weed of the Van country, growing of itself among the wheat.
 3. The Mashtots, the Armenian Church's book of occasional rites and blessings, named for St. Mesrop Mashtots.
 4. Cf. Isaiah 55:10 and 2 Corinthians 9:10, "seed to the sower."
 5. Matthew 13:8, the yield of the good ground, a hundredfold, sixtyfold, thirtyfold.
 6. Upper Armenia (Bardzr Hayk), the historic province around Karin (Erzurum).



CHAPTER VIII

Water, and the Watering of the Fields and Plains

Ը. Զուր եւ ոռոգումն արտօրէից եւ դաշտաց

Understand this well, Tornik. Soil on its own can grow nothing and increase nothing unless water and rain come to water it. Left to itself the soil is barren and bears nothing, unless the quickening power of water and rain joins it. The whole wide world is watered by rain, but many places are watered by rain and running water together. Still, you should know that rain and snow have a great advantage. First, coming down from the clouds of the sky, they can water the highest mountains and the plains alike, at the same moment, while the springs that rise out of the ground, the running brooks and the rivers, water only the flat, low-lying plains. And know this too, Tornik. The greatest reservoir of all the water that runs on the face of the earth is made of rain and snow. It collects in the bosom of the earth as if in a storehouse, and then the springs break out of the earth's bosom and turn into brooks and great rivers. Sometimes the water never sinks into the earth at all. It runs down the hillsides over the surface of the ground, and swollen by the pouring rain it rises into a tremendous flood.

I will give you this much and no more, my quick-minded Tornik. Work the rest out for yourself. These two elements, soil and water, join together to give birth to the matchless children of the whole growing world, in their myriad kinds, and to nourish them.

If we take the soil to be the mother's womb that receives the seed, then it is right to call water the father, who gives the soil's womb its drink and makes it fruitful, so that all those boundless, uncountable growing things are born. Now let me turn to the sown fields under

irrigation, and to how carefully a field has to be prepared so that it waters easily and drinks its fill. Once the run of spring rains is over, the watered fields naturally begin to go thirsty, and the sign is that they take on a dark green color. Then you know they are parched and want water. If your water is plentiful, open two channels or more at once and share the water out among the other thirsting fields. And keep a close watch on the watermen, to make sure they water the field with care. The water has to reach every part of the field evenly. They must not leave one patch dry and parched, and they must not let the water pool up somewhere else and stand, because that harms the plants too. It also does harm if the water is left to flood out at the lower end of the field, washing the topsoil away and laying the roots bare. Then, oh, the plants are torn up by the roots, pulled out of the mother's bosom, and after that they wilt and dry out.

The fields of our village of Archak were made ready by nature, with no labor at all. They are so even and level that a single waterman can turn a millstream of water onto a field and still keep it in hand, and in one day he waters a *kila's* worth of ground.¹ It is so easy, in fact, that he can work by night too. But an even field is not enough by itself. You also have to draw the right guide-furrows for the lie of the field and throw up banks to turn the water, and that makes the waterman's work easier still.

I do not know, Tornik, whether you have ever looked closely at the fields of the monastery of Varag,² at how much trouble they have at watering-time, and what day-wages the watermen charge there. Do you know why? First, most of the fields are uneven, all ridge and slope. Second, they water without drawing the guide-furrow. Third, they say the soil is loose and crumbling and will not hold the water, and so on. All of that is part excuse and part prejudice. The bigger reason is that they will not think, and they do not like work. Sloping fields that the water scours can be brought into order little by little with plain ordinary labor,

so that they never give this trouble again. I will talk about that separately.

When a farmer has more water than he needs, he should not stop at watering his sown fields. It pays very well to water the dry ground and the stubble-fields too, and the gain there is double. The self-sown grasses come up thick and give the animals pasture, and the field itself feeds on its own grasses, both on the fallen leaves, which rot and turn to dung, and on the very roots, which give it strength. This is why the villagers leave a field fallow for two or three years, so that the soil can build its strength back up. But they do not know what it is that builds it up. It is these grasses that give the field its strength. And this should not surprise you, Tornik. The grain-crops we sow take strength out of the soil, plainly enough, while the soil's own self-sown growth gives strength back instead of taking it.

And along with these self-sown grasses, the water itself has strengthening properties of its own, since it carries who knows what enriching juices in it. I know you, Tornik. You will want to know the natural properties of soil and water. But remember that your Papik is a peasant. He did not come out of a university, ready to explain everything to you like a man of science. You will have to be satisfied with my plain lessons.

Farming needs water badly, and the village that has abundant springs and streams is a fortunate one. Its yield is plainly double. But then there are the villages whose natural springs are few, or whose rivers and streams come down from the heights, run through the plains, and go off to empty into the lakelets or join the great rivers. To the grasslands and the tilled fields those bring no profit at all.

Let me give you an example, Tornik, one lying right in front of your eyes. A river runs through the land between our Archak and the village of Kharakonis. From about the beginning of spring, for more than two

months, that river's water runs to waste and empties into the lakelet nearby, and neither we nor the men of that village give a thought to using it, to building small artificial ponds on the upper ground. And how many places we have that nature has shaped for exactly this, lying hollow and cupped! It would be enough to throw up banks of earth around them and build a single sluice-eye of mortared stone at the mouth of the water-channel, then let the river's water in through the spring and hold it there until the time comes to water the fields. Our forefathers had cleverer minds than ours, and more industrious and farsighted ones. In their day they built ponds of exactly this kind, and the ruins of them can still be seen. We cannot even be bothered to repair the ruined ponds. In the ring of mountains east of Van there is a wide valley with myriad springs around it, which run down into the valley's bosom and gather in a lake. In those days the Van country had a good and capable priest who thought about the people's field-water as well as his own office, and he built a dam of mortared stone at the valley's narrow lower mouth and made that lake. The local people call it Keshish Göl for that reason.³ The water of this lake is so plentiful that it waters the fields all around Van, which are very wide, and the newly planted vineyards too. They owe their heavy fruitfulness to that priest's great work. Along with the farming of souls he saw to the farming of bread as well. His name has not come down to us, but the people bless him to this day for the memorial of what he did. There are many other provinces with great and small rivers running through their plains without giving them a palmful of water, like the Euphrates and the Meghraget in the plain of Mush. Above the river Euphrates you can still see the trace of a great water-channel, cut, they say, long ago by a lord of the land who cared about such things, and it watered a good large part of the plain of Mush. It is a shame that the people cannot be troubled to dig that great channel out, open it, and water the many fields left dry. A river of Paradise⁴ flows right past them. Does it begrudge its water to the people born and living along its banks? No. The people are idle and slack. They

want everything made for them. The rain falls from the sky, so the rivers' water should run on its own and water their fields for them. God in his care has prepared a great deal for man in advance, but he has left a small share of the labor to us too, so that the sentence he laid down as Lord, and will not revoke, is carried out, and man has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.

You know, Tornik, how much water matters to village people, and you have seen the quarrels and fights that break out when the fields are watered. Even blood gets mixed with the water. That is why I wanted to be free of those dreadful fights. Working alone, with my own hands, I made two small ponds for our fields, and they are enough for us. And I give you this charge from now on, Tornik. Work always to keep the banks of those ponds solid, and repair the places where the water wears through at the end of every autumn. Do that and you will give your fields plenty of water and reap a plentiful yield, you will stay clear of the villagers' brutal quarrels, and at the same time you will set your village neighbors a useful example, so that they follow it and every master of a house works to make ponds like these for his own fields. The gain comes in more ways than one, because these artificial ponds do more than supply the fields with water. The pond-beds turn to meadow, grow thick grass, and become green pasture for the animals as well. There are many more ways of building water-stores, but this much is enough. Now I turn to the dividing and ordering of the fields, a very important matter, and one that hangs together with this lesson.

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1. The *kila* is an Ottoman grain-measure. A kila of ground is the plot sown with one kila of seed.
 2. Varag is the monastery on Mount Varag near Van, of which Khirmian ("Hayrik") was abbot, and where Papik served as plowman (see Chapter I).
 3. Keshish Göl means "the Priest's Lake" in Turkish. It is the great reservoir in the mountains east of Van, whose waters served the gardens and fields around the city.
 4. The Euphrates is counted among the four rivers of Eden (Genesis 2:14).

CHAPTER IX

The Division of the Fields and Their Even Surface

Թ. Արտօրէից բաժանումն եւ հաւասար տարածութիւն

Pay close attention, Tornik, because this lesson really matters for the farmer. He needs to know how to lay out his fields properly and how to divide them. First of all, the boundary of each field has to be marked off from the next, with balks left between them, at least three cubits wide. These balks are never plowed. They always lie fallow. And they are not there just to serve as a road, so the carts can run easily over firm ground. They matter even more for the grass. If the wheat crop is that useful to us, how much more do the working animals need grass? The balks lying along the edges of the fields become a ready-made pasture for the cattle, so the animals, loosed from the *gutan*,¹ find their grazing right there and nobody has to drive them off to distant places. In the old days, and I saw it myself, the balks were wide, because our forefathers were careful men with a conscience. They felt for the animals, they pitied them and looked after them. But in our own time that virtue has been lifted out of the heart of the village people, who only know how to think about their own bread and give no thought at all to the poor animals.

Now do you see, Tornik, how field is joined right up against field, without even one step of space left between them? If one man manages to yoke his *gutan* before his neighbor does, he will try, in broad daylight and in plain sight, to steal a few furrows from his neighbor's field and fold them into his own. He robs his neighbor's share of soil without a twinge of conscience, he commits a great injustice, and what comes of it is endless quarreling and fighting between the two neighbors.

This is why it matters so much, so very much, that every owner draw a bank around his field and mark out its true boundary. It does more than secure his property. The bank that encloses the field has another use besides. When the field is watered, the water does not run out of it, and when the rains come down hard, the water does not wash across and cut gullies, above all in a field that is not level but ridge and hollow.

There is one more condition of a well-ordered field. The hollow places have to be leveled, so the surface of the field runs even and true from one end to the other. And that is easily done, and not by hand labor alone. Rain and water wash the soil down from the ridges on their own, fill the hollows, and the field levels itself. Only, a bank around the field is not enough. Banks have to be drawn to match the size of the field and the way it lies. Let me explain with a plain example, Tornik, so you take it in well.

Say we have a field two hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits wide, and say it falls away by degrees from the upper end of its length down to the lower end. How do we level it? Very easily, if banks are drawn across it from one side of its width to the other, in two or three places, with an eye to how the steep ground rises and falls. If the ground is very steep, measure off fifty cubits and draw a bank. If the slope is not so sharp, a bank at every seventy-five cubits is enough, and the field is divided into four parts, or three. The banks should be raised a little at a time, and if you work at them every spring and every autumn, you will see the field come level within two or three years.

Eh, Tornik, I know what you are going to say. The field loses a good part of itself to those banks. No. That reckoning is wrong, Tornik. The field loses nothing. In fact it gains a great deal, because its yield doubles and covers the cost of the ground given up. And do the banks bring in no profit of their own? Sow lucerne seed on them and watch how well it does. Its roots hold the bank firm, and you get strong, abundant grass for the winter.

Now let me talk to you about keeping the fields clean, Tornik, which ought to be a standing part of the farmer's work. Whatever stones lie in the fields and get in the way of the plowing and the reaping should always be carried out, with every care. To say nothing of the stones that show on the face of the field, there are big ones under the soil as well, and when the *gutan*'s share strikes them at the plowing, they break it. Then the *gutan* stands idle until the share has been carried into town and mended, and a good deal of time goes to waste. So it is best to dig those stones out from under the ground wherever they turn up and cart them off the field. Experience has shown that the *gutan*'s shares break for other reasons too, so a capable farmer looks ahead and keeps a second share ready to use when he needs it, and never lets a working day go to waste.

Once the stones are cleared, the tall, savage thorns and the other rank weeds have to be pulled up by the roots and cleared away as well. Remember the parable in the Gospel here, Tornik. The thorns choke the seed, and it bears no fruit.² Even greater care must go to pulling the tares³ out of the field while they are growing up together with the wheat. At that stage it is very easy to gather them out of the standing grain. It grieves me that the farmers of Van are so careless about this. They let the tares be reaped in with the wheat and threshed with it, and they gather them into the granary together. And do you know how hard it is afterward to sift the wheat and pick the tares out of it? There are many provinces where they make a great occasion of washing the wheat. The whole family goes down to the mill, stays there for days, and washes the wheat with great care, clearing out not only the tares but the small stones and any other stray seeds. Then they grind, and the bread comes out unmixed and perfectly clean.

But there is an easier way to part the tares from the wheat. Pull them beforehand, out of the standing field, before the reaping, when the tare rises in tufts as high as the wheat and begins to set its ear. I am told that

the hardworking families of Kharberd⁴ set us the example. They go out into the fields at the right season and draw the tufts of tare out whole, and the wheat grows all the stronger for it, because with every self-sown weed, the more of it that springs up in a field, the harder it presses down and saps the growth of the seed we have sown. It is a strange thing, Tornik, that these self-sown, untended weeds grow the stronger and the healthier. Wise men have a saying that self-born plants count as the mother soil's own true children, and that she feeds them more freely with her milk and her sap, while the seed we sow counts as stepchildren. But the natural strength of the mother soil is impartial, equal toward all plants alike. She obeys the natural law that God has laid down. She is not like the mothers of this world, who love only their own children and hate the stepchildren, hate them outright.

Would you like to know, Tornik, what the natural cause of this is, and why we want to weed the foreign grasses out of our tilled ground?

I wish I could explain the cause to you like a man of science. But the people have learned by experience that the self-sown weeds are ruthless enemies of the seed we plant. They grow taller and stronger, they overpower our plants and choke them, and they will not let them grow and gather strength. So the people weed them out by the root, and then you see the sown plants begin to grow quickly.

Now learn, Tornik, the inward and natural cause of it. It seems to me that the thinner the plants stand, the more strongly and quickly they grow, because they take in more sap and nourishment from the mother soil. They suck up the share of sap that would have gone to the plants weeded out, and they thrive on it. A proverb the people use puts the idea plainly. The thin-set onion grows the big head. And is there not a more natural example still? When our mother bears twins, the milk of her breasts is divided between two children. But when she bears just one child, the milk of both breasts is left to the newborn alone, and the nursing child, drinking more, grows stronger. That is enough about



keeping the fields clean. It is time now to speak about the richness of the soil, which will increase the farmer's profit and his earnings, if he knows how to put to work everything that gives the soil its strength and its richness.

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1. *Gutan*, the great wooden ox-plow of the Armenian highlands, drawn by teams of buffalo and oxen.
 2. Matthew 13:7, the seed that fell among thorns.
 3. The tares among the wheat, Matthew 13:24-30.
 4. Kharberd is Harput.



CHAPTER X

The Weakness and the Strength of the Mother Soil

Ժ. Մայր հողին տկարութիւն եւ զօրութիւն

Experience teaches us all by itself, Tornik, like a schoolmaster. When we plow and sow the same field over and over without giving it any rest, we see that the first year it yields heavily, the next year the yield starts to fall off, and by the third year the field is worn out altogether and gives nothing. Village people have known this from experience for a very long time, and so they use two kinds of means to give exhausted soil its strength back. Either they let the field alone for a few years, so that it rests on its own, gathers strength, and grows rich again, or they dung it, making up for the strength the field has lost, and keep on tilling. That way the field is never left idle. Every year it is plowed and sown and it yields, as long as the farmer knows how to change the seed. Here is what I mean. If he sowed wheat the first year, the next year he must sow grass, or else dung the field and grow garden crops in it. At the end of autumn, once the garden crops have been lifted, he can plow the field and sow wheat, and the following year he gets twice the yield. The town farmers of Van know this way of tilling very well. Our village people, for their part, have great means at hand for giving their fields strength. I will not say they are so ignorant that they do not know, because the example of the town farmers is right in front of their eyes. It is nearer the truth to say that they are lazy and have no love for extra work. And there is one great reason besides, which I mentioned in my earlier lessons. A man holds more land than he can work, and he leaves it unplowed so that it gathers strength by lying fallow, and that is all.

Do you see, Tornik? There is our village in front of your eyes. Look how many ash-heaps are piled into great hills before the door of every

house! And never mind the ash-heaps, there are heaps of other refuse too, here and there in the streets, trodden underfoot until they turn back into soil, and our foolish farmers do not know how to use those good, enriching heaps of dung. Is it really so hard, in spring and in autumn, to carry the dung-heaps out to the fields in small carts? Give the soil back the strength it has spent, and the soil renews itself and starts to yield the way it did at first. You know, Tornik, this is a law of nature. The soil has a life of its own, just as a man does. If you keep working it, plowing and sowing without ever feeding its strength, understand that it grows old, it turns barren, and it stops bearing altogether. They say the soils of Europe are worn out with age. But look what that hardworking, ingenious people does. It has found so many ways of giving the soil strength that the old soil turns young again and bears fruit many times over. It astonishes a man to hear that dung is carried by ship all the way from America to Europe. Do you see? Even the dung our own eyes despise has joined the ranks of merchandise, because to a farmer dung is more useful and more precious than a diamond. That noble stone makes a splendid ornament for the nobility, no question. But when a man is starving he sells the diamond and buys bread.

I could weep at our laziness, Tornik, and even more at our stupidity. Our dung does not have to come from America. It stands heaped mountain-high in front of the doors of our own houses, and we are too sluggish to bring ourselves to carry it as far as the field. And it is not only our fields' yield we ought to be thinking about. We ought to be thinking about the cleanness of the village square and the streets as well.

Eh, Tornik, I think I have been talking and judging a little too freely. Can peasant people with no schooling at all have any notion of cleanness, or any taste for it? It is not fair to blame village people who have never been taught, who, on top of their ignorance, are besieged by all the many pains of life, and whose natural minds are chained and

bound, on the other side, by deep prejudice. Say to one of them, Brother Kirakos, all that dung is heaped up in front of your door, why not carry it out and spread it on your fields? "Eh," he answers, "that is more work. A few fields a year are enough for me. I plow them, I sow them, and the rest I leave. Let them lie fallow and gather strength on their own. Our forefathers tilled without dung, and did they not earn their bread? And for proof I call on all the everlasting ash-heaps, which have been piling up since our forefathers' day. It was certainly not we who piled them." There is your peasant's argument. Thinking that way and talking that way, he stays where he is, under the siege of his own mind, and the ash-heap stays where it is too. So we have to wait for time and schooling to move the peasant people's mind toward progress. Then he will see for himself what dung is good for, and the dung-heaps standing in the village today will all be carried off and spread on their fields, with people fighting over them and snatching them out of one another's hands. It will be enough for them to see the yield once, by trial, and be convinced how much, how very much, a field gains from dung. Now I need to talk about preparing the dung, how it should be gathered and made ready so that it does the most good.

If the dung each village house produces is just thrown down wherever it lands and left there, the way it is now, and each pile becomes a mound of earth, it does no good at all. First, the sun's heat draws the sap and strength out of the dung. Second, when the rains come down in torrents they wash over the dung-place and carry off the sap and strength that were in it, and the dung-heap, drained of its sap and strength, turns worthless and unprofitable. So each house in the village must prepare its own dung-pit, separately, wherever it suits. Knowing beforehand how much dung a year brings in, they should dig long square pits to match that quantity, each at least two cubits deep, so that neither rainwater nor the water of the melting snows can ever run out of the dung-pits. It also matters to know what materials go into the dung-pit, and how many different things dung is made of. There is the

ash of the *tonir*,¹ the sweepings of the privies, rotted straw and grass, the leavings of the house, the coarse refuse-straw taken up off the threshing-floor, which the animals will not eat, the scraps left in the mangers, and the rest. All of these are material for the dung-pit. And I had forgotten the spoiled *zhazhik*² from pots gone bad, and things like it, which are all dung-pit material too. Mixed together in one place, they rot, they ferment, they sour, and they turn into a powerful substance for enriching the earth.

Now for the right season to dung the fields. The beginning of spring and the end of autumn are both proper times. The kitchen-gardens are usually dunged at the spring sowing-time, and so are the fields of spring-sown seed, whether wheat or barley or other grain. But it is far better, and far more profitable, to dung in autumn the fields that were plowed in autumn and will go under the light plow, the *haror*, again in spring for the sowing. Do you know, Tornik, how much is gained, and how well a field yields, when it is dunged in autumn and the dung is spread evenly over its face? I have tried it myself. First the rain comes and then the snow, and the strength of the dung soaks right through into the soil, and by spring the soil has grown rich with it. Spring dung does not work on the soil the same way, because if the rain is scant, the sun's heat draws the dung's gaseous strength up and out of it, and the dunged field does not yield as well. And besides all that, a farmer has more time in autumn to cart dung out to the field than in spring, when the days are taken up with sowing and other work. Even in the winter days, while the snow and the cold are not yet blocking the way, a brisk, hardworking farmer can cart dung out to the field and spread it right away.

That is all I will say about what dung is good for. The rest I leave to you, Tornik. Test it in your own work, learn its yield and its profit for yourself, and do not let a single thing that could serve as dung go to waste.



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1. The *tonir* is the sunken clay hearth-oven of the Armenian house. Its ash went out daily to the ash-heap.
 2. *Zhazhik* is a curd food of the village table, made of churned-milk whey.



CHAPTER XI

Harvest

ԺԱ. Հոկտեմբեր

What a happy day it is for the farmer when he goes out to see whether his fields have ripened, and finds the eared wheat flushed a ruddy red, rippling under the soft breath of the wind. *Vash!* he says. The reaping-time has come. He goes home full of joy and brings the good news to the whole household. The strong young workers of the house get ready at once, and if there are not enough of them, sometimes day-laborers are hired as well. And so the reaping of the fields begins.

The village people had a good custom from our forefathers' time. Whoever's field ripened first, the neighbors and friends went to help him. They reaped his field first, and then he went in his turn and reaped theirs, and so, helping one another and working in common, the fields of the whole village were reaped from end to end. That fine custom has fallen away badly now, and from that you can see that the warmth of the neighborly spirit has fallen away with it.

Work, Tornik, so that you reap your own field with your own hand and never have to depend on anyone's help. Let me tell you a fable about that, one that has been written down in many places. There is a bird, the lark, clever by nature and good at keeping herself out of sight, and she sets her nest in the sown fields, where seed and grain are never short. Knowing ahead of time the danger her nestlings will be in, she warns them early. Listen, she tells them, and let me know when the master of the field comes out to see whether the field is ripe, as the reaping-time draws near. The first time he comes, he says, son, the field is nearly ripe. Go and talk to our friends, and let them come and help us reap it. The nestlings listen and tell their mother. The mother says, never worry, little ones. As long as the master is waiting on his friends,

the field will not be reaped. The next time, the master of the harvest comes and sees that the field is fully ripe. Son, he says, our friends have not come. Get word at least to our neighbors. Let them come and help us turn for turn, what would it cost them? We will go and help them in return. The sharp-eared nestlings tell their mother what he said. Again the mother gives the same answer. Rest easy, my little ones. The field will not be reaped as long as the whole business hangs on the help of friends. The third time the master comes, and he sees that the reaping-time has gone by and the wheat has dried and turned brittle. Oh, son, he says, we have fooled ourselves. There is nothing to hope for now, not from friends and not from neighbors. Go quickly and fetch the sickles. We will reap our field ourselves. Now, my little ones, I believe the field really will be reaped. Up, and let me carry you somewhere else.

Let this fable be a lesson to you, Tornik. Never let it out of your mind, and never be left waiting in vain. The hardworking farmer has to reap with his own hand the field he plowed and sowed, because the neighbor who would help you may well have a field that comes ripe at the same time as yours. Is he going to leave his own harvest and come reap your field? Make sure the reaping-time does not slip past you, or the reaping goes hard, the ears shed, and the loss is heavy.

And when you hire day-laborers at reaping-time, look after them well, in bread and in hot food both. There are some who treat their field laborers cruelly, until they are drained of strength and broken with work. When the reapers eat their midday bread, what a kind heart you will show, Tornik, if in that noonday swelter you let the tired workers lie down in the shade of the stacks, make pillows of the wheat sheaves, and sleep sweetly for an hour at least. Then let them get up, whet their sickles, and take up the reaping again. Many other provinces keep this custom. Only the district of Van deals with its laborers without a conscience.

And do you know, Tornik, that our reapers eat their fill of bread with a hearty appetite? And how bad is that for a man's health, when, with no pause allowed him at all, he gets up on a full stomach and bends and pulls the sickle? Never mind that in plain economy it is a loss for the master too. The reaper is tired already, and the food weighs him down all the more. Naturally, if he sets to work at once, he cannot put his back into it. But once a little sleep has revived him and given him back his strength, and the heaviness in his stomach lifts, watch how briskly he swings the sickle then, paying back the hour of sleep with twice the work.

Do you remember, Tornik, how in my earlier lessons I mentioned in passing that the scythe has a very great advantage over the sickle? Only you have to be early, and mow the wheat in its own season, while the grain is not yet shedding. The fields to mow with the scythe are the ones where the growth is thick, mixed with grass, and tall in the stalk, while fields whose growth is sparse and short have to be reaped with the sickle. I wish you could go, Tornik, and see the great spectacle of the strong-armed reapers of Mush at their mowing, above all those of the district of Hatsyats.¹ They know nothing of the sickle. Everything that grows out of the face of the ground they sweep clean with the scythe, and they do not care in the least that the grains fall to the earth, because their soil is so marvelous that the fallen grain buries itself in it. When the autumn rain comes down on it, you see the mown field has turned green again, and so, yielding twice over with no labor at all, it is reaped again the following year. At mowing, and at binding great sheaves, the farmer of Mush truly has no equal, though he is not as good at the other branches of farming.

As I bring this short lesson on reaping to its close, something has come to my mind. The Lord God commanded Moses that neither the vineyard nor the field should be gleaned, because the little clusters and the fallen ears are the portion of the orphans and the poor.² That is



God's merciful commandment, and your old Papik hands it down to you, Tornik. Be kind-hearted and merciful. We have no vineyard, but we have fields, and at reaping-time we must let the poor of the village, the widows and the orphans, come and gather the fallen ears and win the bread they live on. They are the destitute of our village. They have no plowing and no sowing, so what are they to live on? Those who can work and earn a day's wage must be given a share of the work. But there are others, old men and old women, or small children, from whom we can ask no work at all in return. It is for these above all that Christ has spoken. "Lend to those from whom you have no hope of receiving."³

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1. Mush is the great grain-plain of Turkish Armenia, west of Lake Van. Hatsyats is a district of the Mush country (the name means "of the loaves").
 2. Leviticus 19:9-10 and Deuteronomy 24:19-21.
 3. Luke 6:34-35.



CHAPTER XII

The Threshing and the Threshing-Floor

ԺԲ. Կալ եւ կալաստեղ

When the fields are being reaped, the farmer has to move fast, carting the stacked sheaves of cut wheat to the threshing ground as he goes. The work gets much easier if the cart roads have been leveled and put in order ahead of time, because everyone knows that every spring, from the heavy rains and the places where the water runs over, gullies open across the roads and hold the carts up badly. Notice and see, Tornik, how careless the village people are. Only when those natural roads are ruined do they think of laying out some new road, and the old natural road is left to go to waste. And if the new road is longer and full of bends, that does not trouble them at all, because a villager does not know how to add up the lost time, let alone the hardship. So the farmer's work grows much harder, unless the ruined main roads at least are repaired year by year. Before the harvest is even brought to the threshing ground, preparing the threshing ground is a very important matter, and so are the tools the threshing needs, the threshing sledge, the *jarjar*, and the rest. In the provinces east and north of Van there are many villages that never need to prepare a threshing ground at all, because close by the villages lie thick, low-growing meadows that cover the face of the earth like a green carpet. The threshing grounds of our own village of Archak are like that, natural, and need no preparing. Do you see, Tornik, how clean and unmixed our wheat heaps are once the strewn sheaves have been threshed, with no soil or stone in them? But where the ground is bare, lifeless earth, the farmer has to build his floor and make it ready every year at threshing time. He digs over the face of the floor and lets water onto it, levels the uneven places with a spade and trues up the surface, and when the water has dried, they spread straw over it and beat it smooth with the back of the spade. Even so,

floors made this way come out rough and pitted, and the wheat does not stay free of the sandy soil. The best threshing floor is one paved with stone once and for all, with a rim around it at least half a cubit high, so the cart bringing the sheaves stops at its edge and does not come onto the floor. The cart's wheels would ruin the floor's bed.

The way our villages of Van thresh the strewn sheaves, and the tools they use, are good enough. Working the threshing sledge and the *jarjar* together, they get a great deal done. The *jarjar* is the better tool for threshing and for shredding. It is a wooden roller two cubits long, set with sharp iron adze blades in spiraling rows, and as it turns like a wheel it breaks up the strewn sheaves on the floor. Above all, when horses are yoked to the *jarjar*, it turns fast and does far more work than the threshing sledge.

Ask, Tornik, how the poor villagers manage their threshing when they have none of these tools. Eh, Tornik, there is no point in the question. The poor man holds no land in the first place, so how is he supposed to plow and sow? But look at the threshing floor of poor Ghazar of our village, who in his day was the foremost rich *hamban*, the great householder, of the place, and now has barely a few cartloads of wheat to thresh. He has one ox and one cow, yoked to a worn, toothless threshing sledge, and with that he threshes his poor little floor. I have known poor Ghazar a long time. He was a village headman once, and his door stood open to everyone, and now he has come to this. The creditor seized his fields and orchards alike, whether justly or unjustly I do not know. This much I do know. Before the law of the world and before his own conscience, the creditor held himself blameless, and he recited these lines of the poet.

All my life I followed the laws of the world,
and never once did I do a man harm.

I have told you this in passing, Tornik, so you will keep clear of debt. Otherwise you too will end up a poor Ghazar.

You have not seen it, Tornik, but I have seen it in Bolis,¹ and I will tell you about it. The ingenious craftsmen of Europe have now invented a machine for the threshing, and it is a formidable thing. It rides on four wheels like a great wagon, and inside it is fitted with iron wires of every gauge, fine and coarse, and with other threshing and shredding blades, more than the wits of peasants like us can follow. The machine is driven by fire. Two men stand on top of it, unbinding the sheaves without a pause and feeding them in through the mouth of the hopper, and the sheaves are broken up small and driven out through the machine's two openings, the wheat from one and the straw from the other. The machine is always set up close beside the stacks, since it can be pulled along like a cart and taken wherever you like.

Do you see, Tornik, how far science has lightened people's labor? What we labor at for months (and our floors are often caught under the snows, and besides we have to wait for the soft winds, so we can winnow the wheat and lift it clear of the straw, and pass it twice through the horsehair sieves, and all the rest of it), all that month of work the machine finishes in a few days, with none of the drudgery. And it cleans the wheat so thoroughly that a man is amazed to see how completely the stones, the soil and the stray grains are carried off to one side. There is no need to clean the wheat again with sieves before it goes to the water mill to be ground.

Do you know, Tornik, how the villagers hurry at the autumn threshing, to gather the floors in before the rainy season starts? Because at threshing time the farmer wants no rain at all, only sun and a favoring wind. But the great advantage of this machine is that it can work in any season.

That is why the great farm owners of Europe keep their wheat unthreshed in the stacks for a long time, and when they need it, they bring the machine up to the stack and thresh. Experience has proved that wheat keeps better over a long stretch in the stacks, in its own ears and husks, than in the granary, where it often heats and gets weevils if you do not turn it over and mix it now and then. Our poor threshing floors have no need of a machine. Our machine is the arms of hardworking men. Could we really bring that costly machine into our country, when a single one is worth a thousand liras? As I have said many times, farm labor in Europe has been made very easy for the village people. The villager has no need to buy a machine of his own, because there are companies whose whole business is working machines of that kind, and the villager pays only the hire and has the whole of his wheat stacks threshed. And do you know how easily that unwieldy machine is carried from village to village, with only two horses yoked to it, thanks to the leveled, well-made roads? Who knows? A time is surely coming, a day will come, when that machine comes walking into our country. I will die, and you will see it, and you will remember your Papik's prophecy.

That ends the lesson of the threshing and the threshing ground. Now I have to talk about preparing the granary, which is an important matter for the farmer.

1. Bolis, Constantinople.

CHAPTER XIII

The Granary

ԺԳ. Շտնմարան

It came into my head all of a sudden, Tornik, what a happy meeting of days this is. Tomorrow is the feast of the Cross of Varag.¹ It has been the custom since our forefathers' time, and tomorrow the whole Vaspurakan country will put the *harisa*² on to cook. For the village people it is a day of rejoicing above all others. We call this day *kali korkot*, the threshing-floor *korkot*, because the threshing floors are coming to an end, and out of the floor's first fruits the village housewives make *korkot* for the *harisa*, choosing the white-grained wheat for it, and every house in the village sets its *harisa* on, each by its own measure. There was a time when the greatest *hambans* of the village, the rich householders, would each slaughter an ox for the *harisa*. They remembered their dead and prepared the soul-bread, and all the village people, the poor among them, ate their fill and blessed the master of the house. That time of plenty is gone, Tornik. Never mind an ox. These days it is enough if they can kill a kid. There are many old songs for the *harisa*, but let me sing you one of them again.

Today, do you know what day it is?
 It is our feast of the Cross of Varag,
 and we call this the day of *kali korkot*.
 It is the great feast of *harisa*.
 The whole land of Vaspurakan
 keeps the feast of *harisa*.
 Hey there, mistress of the house, light the *tonir*,
 set on the big copper and the crocks.
 We have killed our fatted ox,
 the meat and the *korkot* are ready, look!
 Gather round the copper,

all you strong lads of the village.
Beat it, beat it hard,
so says our Father the Illuminator.
Beat it until they melt together,
the bone and the meat as one,
let them melt and mix with the *korkot*.
That is the sign of a good *harisa*.
Kneel down, children, on the felt-cloth.
It needs no tablecloth, we are village people.
Pour out the *harisa*, mistress,
pool the butter on top of it, pool on pool.
Brides of the house and daughters,
quick now, quick, bring the *tap-tapan*,
the hot, hot loaves straight out of the *tonir*.
How sweet they are with *harisa*!
Take up those rough, unhewn,
great big, mighty spoons.
Eat, eat, and may it be sweet to you,
laborers worn out with work.
Blessed be our housewife,
she has cooked the *harisa* well.
Blessed be the Illuminator,
who gave us the light of faith,
and with the faith handed down to us
this memorial of the *harisa*.
Blessed be his memory!
Let us keep it, keep this memorial,
let us always remember and never forget.
That was the great day of our salvation.

Now let me tell you, Tornik, the tradition of the *harisa*, and how it
has been remembered and handed down to us from the day of our
Illuminator.

I heard it from my own Papik, who used to tell it this way. When Saint Gregory the Illuminator came up out of the deep pit and arrived at Vagharshapat, he preached to the heathen Armenian people for sixty days straight, and people listened to him by the tens of thousands.³ There were surely many poor among them, and the Illuminator wanted to prepare a meal for the poor. But he did not make this meal by a miracle, the way Jesus did. He gave the word to the villagers in their thousands, and they brought plenty of oxen and sheep. He had them slaughtered, great cauldrons were set on the fire, and the meat was filled in with the *korkot* on top of it. Then he gave the order to the strong-armed young men and said, Beat this (*harek zsa*), and that is how the dish kept the name *harisa*.⁴ It is a noble Armenian dish. Hayrik⁵ loved *harisa*, and he always had it cooked at the monastery of Varag. Once, in his exile, when he was hungry for *harisa*, he wrote a letter to the brotherhood of Varag, and I have kept the words of that letter in my memory.

Happy brotherhood of Varag, you who live under the wing of the great Holy Sign!⁶ Do you ever remember the *pandukht* Hayrik, Hayrik in exile? Ah, I remember you. I remember the feast of the Cross of Varag, which is near. I remember the monastery's noble *harisa*, and you will eat the dish our fathers left us without Hayrik. Eat it, and may it be sweet to you. Eat your fill, and drink the cold, cold water of the springs that break out of the breast of the mountain of Varag. And Hayrik, in his exile, can only sigh for the *harisa*. What would it cost you to remember Hayrik and hand one ladleful of *harisa* to Habakkuk's angel, so he can bring it to Babylon,⁷ and I can eat and bless you? Keep well.

Eh, Tornik, that is enough. Enough of the *harisa* and its tradition. Now back to the order of our lesson.

In the village economy, making a granary is a very plain and primitive business. The villagers usually pit their wheat, their barley and their other grain in the ground, digging a hole deeper than a man's

height. They line the sides of the pit with grass or straw, but even so the grain very often comes to harm. It draws damp, and the bread comes out musty. And since these wheat pits sit out in the open, with no roof over them, time and again they take in water from the rains and the snows, and the wheat rots. It looks, Tornik, as if in the old, old days the villagers kept their wheat underground to keep it safe, as they kept many other things too. The strange part is that in our own secure times they have held on to the same custom. But that is the fruit of carelessness and laziness. A villager builds a house for himself, a stable for his cattle and a fold for his sheep. Is it really so hard for every house to build granaries to match the grain it has? Some make great hive-shaped bins of clay, which hold grain in large quantities. The bins keep the grain very well. Only the roof over them has to be well made, so that no drips come down inside.

But the granary must always be counted the best of all, because we can build it as roomy as we like, with separate bays inside for every kind of grain. The wheat has to be stirred and turned over at the right times, so it gets air and does not heat and breed weevils.

Ah, Tornik, my heart sighs. What does a village farmer in debt need with a granary at all? Look, there is the threshing floor of our friend Brother Kirakos, and they are measuring it. Look at it, a wheat heap of some twenty *kilas*.⁸ The usurers from the town have come, all ready and waiting. They measured the heap, and it came to twenty *kilas*. First the state's tithe was paid. Then the usurers measured out and took, each by the reckoning of his own interest. What was left? Only the sweepings of the floor, and even on those the poor came pouring down, took the share of the floor that is the poor's due, and swept the floor clean. Now look at the sorry state of Kirakos. He hung his sad face, picked up the floor broom, the shovel, the carrying-pole and the rest, and went home. The housewife asked him, man alive, is there no share left for us out of that huge threshing floor? What are our brood of little ones going to

eat? The master of the house answered, rye, rye (hachar), and the barley will hardly be enough for the guests who come and go. The housewife wrung her hands and wept. Ah, God, you saw it all. The whole year long I baked the bread in front of that blazing *tonir*, I cooked the food, I looked after the laborers. What judgment is this, Lord? Must my children and I go without wheaten bread? Eh, housewife, do you not know? The wheat is for the townsfolk, and the fat, fat slaughter beasts are for the townsfolk again. The villager's portion is rye, millet and *tanapur*. Even that is enough. Give glory to God, wife. There are people worse wronged than we are, because the villager of Mush lives on his coarse gruel alone, which is far poorer stuff than the rye and the millet.

Ask it, Tornik. When will our village people be delivered from the hands of these conscienceless, unjust usurers, who are not content with the wheat on the threshing floor but are seizing our fields as well, which are our life and our refuge? Already very nearly a good part of the freehold land of the villagers of our own Archak is seized. This is a matter of life and death for the farming people. And there is one remedy and cure for it, only one. The just law of the state, and the hand of authority, can cut short the usurers' hand, which lies heavy on the indebted farming people.

Some years back the state did turn its attention to this. It founded lending-chests in the head towns of the provinces, at very moderate interest, so that the farming people could leave the usurers and turn to the lending center instead.⁹ But will those chests be enough against the enormous, uncounted, piled-up sums that the whole people of the state's land is carrying on its back today? The threshing floor and the granary gave me the opening, Tornik. I have said only this much, in passing, and it is enough. We can leave the question to the great economists. Let them write great volume upon volume on the economy of the land, which is the life of the land's prosperity, because the state lives by bread, and so does every people under the state.



1. The feast of the Holy Cross of Varag (Varaga Khach), kept in late September. The monastery of Varag near Van treasured a famed relic of the True Cross.
2. *Harisa* is hulled wheat (*korkot*) and meat boiled slowly together and beaten smooth, the Armenian festival dish. The *tonir* of the song is the sunken clay hearth-oven.
3. Saint Gregory the Illuminator, brought up from the pit of Khor Virap, preached at Vagharshapat before the conversion of Armenia (c. 301). Tradition gives the preaching sixty days and more.
4. *Harel* means "to beat," and *harek zsa* "beat this!" That is the folk etymology of *harisa*.
5. *Hayrik*, "Little Father," is the author Khrimian himself, sometime abbot of Varag. The exile is his enforced residence far from Van.
6. The Surb Nshan ("Holy Sign"), Varag's relic of the Cross.
7. Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14) 33-39, where the angel carries Habakkuk, dinner in hand, to Daniel in the lions' den at Babylon.
8. *Kila* (Ottoman kile), a dry measure for grain.
9. The Ottoman agricultural lending-chests (*menafi sandıkları*), reorganized in 1888 as the Agricultural Bank, lending to farmers at fixed interest.



CHAPTER XIV

Winter and the Fodder of the Beasts

ԺԴ. Ձմեռն էլ անասնոց դարման

When the threshing is finished, autumn goes and winter comes, and the snows cover our plains and mountains. Work in the fields stops, and all the animals are tied up in the stables in front of the mangers, sometimes for three months, sometimes for four or more, and there they stand tied. We have to feed them straw and hay, which is the meager share they get of their own labor, while the good part stays with us, the wheat, the milk, the *madzun* (curdled yogurt), the cheese, the butter, and the rest.

But you know, Tornik, winter starts at the tops of the mountains first. One morning we get up and see that the peaks are covered with snow, and that is the sign. It tells us winter is close. It will come down from the mountain to the plain, and that is when the village people have to see to their winter preparations.

You know what our villagers' houses and stables are like, flimsy, unsound buildings that have to be patched up again every autumn. Do you suppose, Tornik, that the village people have understood the emptiness of this world's life so deeply that they never care to build anything that lasts? No. Do not judge it that way. First, the villager has no timber of his own planting and tending. If he had the timber, he has no money. And if he set out to build, he does not know how. I will come back to all this in its place.

It is the hard winter climate of the country we live in that has made it necessary to build stables for the animals. The warm southern provinces are spared this work and left free of it, because there is no cold there and no snow. The farming people's labor is far lighter. They have no care or worry at all about wintering the animals, and their animals graze

in the open twelve months of the year. So they never need to build a stable or lay in fodder, hay or straw, and they never need to grow grass, cut it and stack it. The grass springs up on its own so thickly, above all on the wide deep plain of Cilicia (the Chugur Ova),¹ that in autumn they set fire to it and burn it off, which puts strength back into the soil, and the next year the grass comes up twice as strong.

But the winter cold of our country forces us to get stables and fodder ready for the animals. You can see, Tornik, what our stables are and what getting them ready amounts to. If some of the roof beams have rotted, they get changed. If the mangers have fallen in, they get rebuilt. And if the stable floor is worn into holes, it has to be leveled with flagstones, and so on.

That is as much as the peasant farmer can do for his animals' stable. A man who gives no thought to the hut he lives in, is he going to worry about poor dumb animals? And he is right, because a man measures everything by the measure of his own life.

Enough of the stable, Tornik. Let us talk about the animals' fodder. As you know, dry straw is our poor animals' fodder. Hay is kept for the sheep alone, though sometimes, toward spring, the buffaloes and the oxen may get hay by itself, once a day. But the breeding buffalo cows, the milk cows, the cows in calf, the calves, none of these are thought worthy of hay. There is an injustice for you. The cows give the milk and butter that feed people, and they give the calves that grow into the farmer's oxen, and still they count for nothing with our villagers of Van. Perhaps in other provinces the villagers do not treat them this way. You have seen it yourself, Tornik. By spring our ill-used cows are in such a state that they cannot get up from where they lie and have to be hauled up by the tail, and the cows in calf often labor hard at their calving. Then you see the housewife's conscience wake in her. She prepares a bowl of warm mash and brings it to the cow that has calved. It is true that the women are keener to make something of the cows and look

after them, because they want to take more milk, make *madzun*, and boil *tanapur*, the village dish. But what do the poor cows eat, that they should give milk? Can they give milk on dry straw alone? A little straw barely holds the substance of one *kash*² of milk, and men of science among the farmers have proved this by analysis.

Now it is time to tell you this, Tornik. I have heard that the farmers of Europe do not feed their cattle straw at all, but hay and other green feed instead. By clever experiments they have found such ways of fattening animals that a man who hears of it is astonished and cannot believe it, an ox or a cow weighing seventy or eighty *litra*, while our fattened oxen and cows barely come, at the very most, to twenty or twenty-five *kash*. Think what those animals must eat, and in what daily quantity, when twenty *kash* of milk's substance alone is formed out of it. And the strange part is that those cows are kept tied in the stable and fed there, summer and winter alike. It seems the whole country there is worked land, and there are no pastures at all. Well then, Tornik, our animals are happy enough, at least in summer, wandering and frisking on the cool mountains, in the flowering valleys, over the green meadows. And that cold, cold water they drink! Evening comes, the village herd turns home from the field, and the cows, their udders full, come swaying and lowing along, heavy, heavy, proud, proud, each one to her own master's house. The housewife and the young wives snatch up the milking pail and run. The cow stands still and they set to milking. A housewife with a conscience knows how much to take and leaves the calf a fair share. But there are women with no conscience, who wring and squeeze the cow's teats so hard that they leave the poor calf next to nothing.

Sometimes there is a cross-grained red cow that hands down a very just verdict. When the housewife squeezes the teats too hard, the cow loses her temper, kicks, spills the milk and breaks the pail into the bargain, and so gets justice for her cheated calf. If only people would

take the example and judge as fairly as a bad-tempered cow. You see it, Tornik, and you know it. For all their grazing on pastures so rich, how much milk do they give? Barely one *kash* a day, or two *kash* at the very most. And in winter, when they live on nothing but straw, their milk shrinks badly, and the calves have to be filled up by force.

No doubt, Tornik, you would like to know why our cows, which fatten in a garden of Eden on flowers and grasses of every kind, do not give milk like the cows of Europe, or put on as much flesh as they do.

Let me tell you, Tornik. First, our cows are not of good breeds. You can see it for yourself. They are small, stunted things. Meanwhile the stock-keeper of Europe puts every effort and every clever experiment into improving the breeds, and not of the cows only, but of every kind of animal. We have neither that wit nor that much concern. We believe it is simply nature that the cows of our country come out stunted. Second, I have heard from a man of the craft that with animals that range the pastures the way our milk cows do, roaming without a pause, the surplus milk in the udder changes quality, or turns to water. The sheep come at midday to the *peratekh*, the milking-ground, to be milked there. If it were the custom to milk the cows the same way, then perhaps, once the milk gathered in the udder was emptied out, it would fill again by evening and could be milked a second time. The experiment would be easy enough. But can we pile this new labor too onto our village families, who work without a rest?

Leave that aside. Suppose we said to our villagers, keep the milk cows in the stable, cut green grass for them in spring and dry hay in summer. Say nothing, Tornik! If we said any such thing, every villager would laugh at us. We have mountains and valleys so wide and so rich in grass that, lying unworked, they are pasture and nothing else. Would it not be folly to abandon those splendid pastures, where the animal grazes for itself with its own mouth and costs us no labor, and go out from spring onward cutting grass for the milk cows, when hay is the

winter store and nothing more? The villagers' judgment here is perfectly sound. If the European stock-keeper keeps his cows that way, he has his reasons. First, he has no pasture. Second, from his cows' abundant milk he runs a great trade, selling milk in huge quantities every day. But if our villagers had milk in abundance, who would they sell it to? True, they can make butter and sell it to the townsfolk, but for them that is a trifling gain. And do you see the peasant's wit and the peasant's reckoning, Tornik? He loads up his bit of curd and his thin flat loaves, carries them from the village to town, sells them, and counts it a great profit.

Let us come back to our first subject, Tornik. I have said quite enough about the milk cows, and what I want is to show you how far behind our village people are in the keeping of animals. They do not know that stock-raising is an important branch of agriculture, and a more profitable and productive one. The keeping and feeding of the stock does not call for the same grinding toil so much as for watchful care, and its return can even be greater than tillage. Here, Tornik, let me give you a short reckoning, so you will be all the more convinced.

Suppose we have five cows, five breeding buffalo cows, five mares and five she-asses, twenty head in all, of four kinds. Most likely fifteen of the twenty will bear young every time, and after three years the young are fit to work or to sell. And as they bear year after year, however much they multiply, the profit multiplies by just as much. It is true that in the first years this small capital shows no great return, but it is capital of the self-increasing kind. It grows as it goes, and the more it grows, the more it multiplies its gain. There is no other trade on this earth whose profit equals the profit of raising cattle. Do you want an example and a proof, Tornik? Look at our neighbors the Kurds, who are shrewder than we are in this and put their strength into keeping animals rather than into bare tillage, because experience has taught them what it brings in. Look, they keep sheep by the thousands, black



cattle by the hundreds, horses past counting in the droves they call *ylkhi*, and the rest. We look on, and we neither feel it nor add it up, that the wealth of a whole class of Kurdish chieftains comes from the keeping of animals. Say it, Tornik. They have wide, cool pastures, they have the advantage, and when they need to, they can defend their animals from enemy raiders. Yes, Tornik, that is a weighty observation too. But I am speaking only of the principle, that the raising of animals is the more profitable. And that observation of yours about the present may hold today and be over tomorrow, because time goes and time comes, and it brings peace and security with it, thanks to our state and its building of the land.

Well, Tornik, this lesson has run very long, and in a good many places different subjects have gotten mixed up together. Now I am going to talk to you about the sheep, its profit and its keeping.

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1. Çukurova, "the deep plain," is the Cilician lowland.
 2. Kash and litra are local units of weight in the Van country.



CHAPTER XV

The Sheep and Its Most Profitable Yield

ԺԵ. Ոչխար եւ իւր ամենաշահ արդիւնք

Of all the tame animals in the world, the sheep is the most profitable. In a single year it gives back very nearly its own worth. A ewe, at the average price in our country, is worth fifty *dahekan*.¹ In a year she gives one lamb, worth twenty to twenty-five *dahekan*. She gives two *kash*² of cheese and two *kash* of butter, worth another sixteen to twenty *dahekan*. She gives one *kash* of wool besides, which at five *dahekan* brings the whole to forty-one. And if I count the *zhazhik* too, the whey-curd of the village table, it comes to forty-five.

The sheep is a truly blessed animal, gentle, home-bred and innocent. When John the Baptist, the hermit of the wilderness, saw Jesus, he called him the Lamb of God.³ And when Father Abraham had bound Isaac and laid him on the altar to kill him, the angel called out to him. Abraham looked up and saw a fine ram caught in the sabek tree. God had sent that ram to be the offering in Isaac's place, and Isaac was saved.⁴

Sheep multiply at an astonishing rate, and because they are small and quiet by nature you can keep them by the thousands in one place. The sheep is a delicate animal and a hardy one at the same time. The summer heat troubles it badly, especially when its pasture lies down in the plain, but the cool mountains and the upland meadows are the sheep's kingdom. Villages built on the plain, with wide meadowland, like our own, are not well suited to keeping sheep. The wet meadows in particular breed a sickness in the grazing sheep, a sickness they call *kyapanak*, which I think must be a Kurdish word.⁵

But in the mountain villages, which are mostly where the Kurds live, the profit of sheep-keeping runs very wide, because in this the Kurds are cleverer than we are, with a sharper eye for gain. They keep sheep by the thousands and they know how to tend them well. To begin with, their pasture grounds are enormous. Grassy mountains, valleys full of flowers, and glens with springs everywhere have fallen to them as their great share, and there the sheep graze all summer long. For the winter they can cut and stack as much hay as they please, in great mounds, and they give the sheep hay only when the snow comes down hard and covers all the mountains and the sun-facing slopes. When the snow is not so deep, and the wind sweeps it off the sunny mountainsides, the sheep can graze their fill. At night the flocks stay in the sheltered hollows of the mountains, where no wind reaches and the sun strikes full. The Kurds call these warm open-air places *havshi*. There are times when the flocks can go hungry in the *havshi* for as long as three days, until the blizzard passes. That is why I told you the sheep cannot bear the summer heat but stands up well against the cold of winter. The Lord God provided for it, and covered that poor creature's back with thick wool. And is it not that blessed creature's wool that warms our backs too?

We villagers, who keep only a few sheep to a house, shut them in the sheepfold in winter. By day we bring them out, give them hay on the snow, and shut them in again.

The sheepfold must be wide enough for the number of sheep, so that they can sit and stand without crowding. It needs vent-holes in the roof and the walls, because a sheep needs clean air more than anything. It is used to breathing the air of the mountains. The sheep likes to be clean and dry, so the floor of the fold must always be spread with dry, fine litter, gathered and stored in summer. The roof of the fold needs the same care, because drips do the sheep great harm.

In spring, from the middle of April, the sheep begin to lamb one after another, and once they are out they graze on the new grass and the old. In the evening the shepherd loads the newborn lambs and kids on his little donkey and brings them home to the village. In May, when the pastures come into their strength, the milking begins. At midday the shepherd brings the sheep to the *peratekh*, the milking-ground, and you will see the young wives and girls of the village coming out to it with their milk-jugs and pails, each one to milk her own sheep. Those happy milkmaids trim their heads, and the mouths of their jugs, with the colored flowers of spring, then shoulder the jugs and go back to the village singing joyously. And when the milking is over, the lamb-herd, who has kept the lambs and kids penned apart, lets them out, and then you should see the merry sight. The ewes bleat, the lambs bleat back. You would say the mother is talking to her lamb and the lamb to its mother. Hundreds of sheep and lambs get mixed up together until the lambs find their own mothers, because a real mother will never let a strange lamb nurse from her. And here is the marvel of the shepherd's craft. When a lamb goes astray and cannot find its mother, the shepherd catches it up at once and hands it to her. Do you know how he can tell? Seeing them once, at the birth, is enough for him. The picture of the newborn lamb and its mother is printed on his unschooled mind like a photograph, so that among hundreds of sheep, among lambs born early and late that are the same color as one another, his sharp eye picks each one out. Shepherds like that are very rare, and they are called *pspor*, which means keen-eyed and quick.

And we must not forget, Tornik, that the great wolf-throttling mastiffs matter enormously to the shepherd. We would be quite right to call them his bodyguard and his advance troops. They go ahead of the flock and watch all four sides. If they catch sight of a wolf far off, you should see how they charge in a pack until they have driven him away. Sometimes, if they overtake him, they seize the wolf and throttle him, and that day the shepherd gives his brave dogs a great feast of bread

and butter, which they call *chmur*. The dogs' everyday food is milk. The shepherd pours it out for them freely into a big wooden bowl, a *kot*, and crumbles barley bread into it, and those well-mannered dogs make a ring around it and eat without fighting. Are they the starving street dogs of the city, to fight over a bone? The shepherd's dogs have a noble character, you must understand. They do not bark for nothing, but let a stranger come near the flock and they attack at once.

In short, Tornik, the mastiffs are of the greatest use to the flock. Without them the wolves would do the sheep great harm, and the shepherd cannot defend the flock alone, above all when the mist comes down. I do not know why it is. The books make much of the shepherd's name. Why do they never remember the dogs, which are the shepherd's helpers and his strength? Look after our sheep-dogs, Tornik. If they weaken and lose their strength, they can no longer drive off the wolves. Pay the shepherd his full wage as well, and take better care of him, and give the *pspor* shepherd a present now and then. Because a shepherd of sheep, you know, is not like the shepherd of a people, who shepherds without pay and puts up with it, the way the priests of our villages do.

I forgot to mention, Tornik, that the sheep must be given salt in season. Sheep love salt beyond anything, and if they get no salt there is no taste in their milk or their meat. Now, villages near the sea of Van or of Archak do give them sea-water to drink instead of salt, and that does them harm, because the water of those seas carries soda in it rather than clean salt. And quite apart from that, drinking too much of it hurts them. So salt is considered better and more wholesome.⁶

The shepherd's life, Tornik, is as innocent and happy a life as there is, though people imagine that shepherds are wretched men. Cut off from human company, living among animals that cannot talk, forever wandering the empty mountains, surely, people think, they must turn dull and slow-witted.

That opinion is quite wrong. Shepherds know their craft thoroughly. They know every kind of sickness a sheep can take, and they know the remedy and the treatment. And the power of every flower and every plant-root of the mountains, things still unknown to science, they know from experience.

The shepherd's life is a picture of the life of the old patriarchs, where we find not only men but girls keeping sheep, like Rebecca and Rachel.⁷

Those mountain-bred shepherds, yes, are happy always, and they never know sickness, because the air they breathe is the purest there is. And do you know what their natural, everyday food is? They milk the ewes, crumble bread into that foaming, unwatered milk, set it in a cold spring, and eat it with a spoon. They keep no hour and no season for their meals. Sometimes they milk during the night watch and set the milk aside in crocks until morning, and when you look there is cream a finger thick on the face of it. That is the shepherd's little breakfast. What he drinks is the clear water of those ice-cold springs. What he breathes is the scent of every kind of flower, a delight to his nose. His sleep at night is untroubled and still. He has no soft bed. He stretches out on the bare ground, puts a stone under his head for a pillow, pulls his felt cloak, his *kapanak*, over him, and sleeps, while the dogs stand guard over the flock. And his sleep is very light and very short. He half wakes as he sleeps, because in his heart there is always the suspicion, the fear, that the wolves will fall on the flock in the middle of the night. Sometimes it is a strange thing to watch. The shepherd sees packs of wolves in his dream, and he starts talking to himself in his sleep and urging on the dogs, and now and then he jumps straight up, bewildered.

The shepherd never came out of a school of fine arts, Tornik, but he is a born musician. He takes up his shepherd's pipe, sits down on a high rock and begins to play, and do you know how sweet, how lovely that pipe sounds? Sometimes the shepherd uses his pipe like a general giving orders to his flock. He gathers up the strays and calls them in, above all

at salt-time. Then you should see how the flock presses forward all together toward the salt, which sheep would give their souls for.

That is the shepherd's life and work, Tornik. I have described it to you very briefly. But there is a question. We count the shepherd's life happy, wholly free of the world's noise. Does the shepherd count himself happy? Is he content with his life? A fable of the wise comes to mind here. Let me tell it to you. Listen carefully.

There was a rich shepherd who owned a great many sheep and cattle. One day, while his animals were grazing on a meadow near the sea, he turned his eyes to the water and saw the sea laughing, rippling under the soft breeze, and the merchants' ships coming in toward the harbor with their sails spread and full.

Our shepherd, who knew nothing of the world, was taken in by this vision of good fortune. He sighed, and began to complain about his lot. If only I were a merchant too, traveling from country to country by sea and by land, hearing things, understanding the world, making a name for myself as a merchant of standing. What sort of life is this of mine? Night and day I live among animals. The whole world is running after civilization, and I do not know the taste or the smell of it. True, my house is full of every good thing. I enjoy the good things God has given me. I lack nothing.

But is eating and drinking enough for a man? I am rich, and what good is it, when I have stayed unknown, a plain shepherd and nothing more? If I die, even my memory dies with me. Who ever saw a monument raised over a shepherd's grave? I want my name written up with the world's great men, so that the generation to come will read it and remember me.

That empty vision took our shepherd in. He went and sold all his animals, and it came to a great sum. He laid the money out on a quantity

of goods and carried them off to sell in a foreign country. Our shepherd, who could not read and could not reckon, sat on board the ship in high spirits, doing sums in his head. I bought at this price, I will sell at that much higher price, and on this first venture I will make so much.

But while the shepherd was enjoying his reckoning, the sea, true to its nature, began a reckoning of its own. It raised a terrible storm, drove the ship onto the rocks of a coast and broke it apart, and all the goods spilled into the sea. The poor shepherd clung to a plank and barely got away with his life. He reached land, and afterward came home in another ship, stripped bare. He had been a master, and now he became a hired servant. Little by little he came to own animals again, and got back to where he had begun. One day he went out again to that pasture by the sea, and saw the sea laughing in front of him just as before, and the ships coming in loaded.

But our shepherd has come to his senses now. All right, he says, you cheating sea, I do not trust your laughter anymore. You ruined my house. But what you put me through taught me something. A shepherd cannot be a merchant. From now on I will be content with my lot and give thanks to God.

Do you see it, Tornik? Let this fable be a lesson to you, so that no empty fancy ever takes you in, and you never say to yourself one day, I will sell my sheep, and the *gutan* cattle with them, and sell all my fields, and it will come to a great sum, and I will go to Van and be a merchant, give up the villager's life and become a townsman, build fine houses, go up to Stambul now and then, and get the credit and the name of a great merchant, and so on. You do not know yet, Tornik. You have not been tried. The trials of city life are more ruinous than the trials of the sea, in money and in morals alike. Far, far from the city, and from the city people's way of living! The safe life is the village, and the honest living is farming. A tiller of the soil will not make a merchant, and a plowman will not make a sea-captain or a helmsman. God who provides has set

every man in his own place to work, the townsman in the town, the villager in the village, the captain on the sea, the plowman in the field. People are happy when they are content with the position they find themselves in and do not reach for what is beyond their strength, beyond their measure, and out of their grasp. Do not take this to mean, Tornik, that when you want to get ahead I am putting a stone in front of your foot to keep you where you are. Not at all. What I mean is that you should get ahead inside the village life. Be a village headman, own a farmstead, own sheep by the thousands and thousands. But do not leave the village and the field. Remember our fable, and do not go near the water's edge.

That ends the long lesson I have given you on the care and keeping of sheep. Now I am going to talk about treating animals with compassion.

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1. Dahekan, the old Armenian coin-name, used here for the current silver piece of the country's reckoning.
 2. Kash, a local unit of weight in the Van country.
 3. John 1:29.
 4. Genesis 22:9-13. The Armenian Bible renders the "thicket" of the Hebrew as the tree "Sabek" (the source prints "Sarek").
 5. Evidently Turkish kelebek, "butterfly," the liver-fluke rot that sheep take from wet pastures.
 6. Lake Van and Lake Archak (Erçek) are soda lakes. Their water carries natron rather than common salt.
 7. Genesis 24:15-20 and 29:9.

CHAPTER XVI

Compassion for Household Animals

ԺԶ. Գթասիրտութիւն ընտանի անասնոց վերայ

We know it, Tornik, and holy Scripture tells us, that when the Lord God had created all the animals, he held a review. He brought every living creature and marched them in ranks past Adam the king, to show him that all of this had been placed under his rule. David says it too. "You have put all things under his feet, the sheep and the oxen and all the rest."¹

Some of these animals have been tamed. They serve us in all our work and obey us however we ask. Others are free, in open revolt against man, because they are predators, stronger than we are, and they live in the distant deserts and, even more, in the forests. God, who created them, does not forget them either. He gives them their food. The lion cubs roar and ask God for their meat.² And what is their meat? The weaker animals, which they have to hunt and eat to stay alive. It is a law of nature in this world that the weak are food for the strong. And never mind dry land. The same law rules the world of the sea, where you can watch the little fish forever feeding the big ones.

But do not think, Tornik, that those wild, unbroken animals are entirely beyond man's control. No. Man, with his clever inventions, can hunt down those raging animals, shut them in cages, and train them so thoroughly that they obey their trainer like a child.

Our household animals, though, have grown so used to us that they live with us and count almost as members of the family. They are our fellow workers in all our steady labor and in everything else besides.

And yet, because we are the masters and lords of our animals, we beat them and torture them and never answer for it, even though the

law of the land sets a penalty for tormenting animals. Never mind the law. In Europe there is a society devoted to the protection of animals, with appointed officers who keep watch like police, and if they see anyone treating any animal cruelly, that person is arrested on the spot and takes his punishment. If they find a driver has grudged his horses their feed and left them weak and underfed, he takes his punishment and pays his fine at once. And the man who has fed his draft horse so well that it pulls a wagon loaded with enormous bales all on its own gets a reward and a prize from the protection society.

We have nothing of the kind, no punishment and no prize. But our prize, our reward, is our own profit, because the better we feed our working animals and keep them fit and strong, the more we gain from the double work they do. When our animals are weak and worn out, our plowing and everything else turns out weak too. That much is plain. Weak workers make weak work. The example is right in front of your eyes, Tornik. Look how much more ground the *gutan* plows when strong buffaloes and oxen are yoked to it, next to the *gutan* whose animals are thin and spent and take two days to finish one day's plowing.

But if we look after our animals only with an eye to profit, that is no virtue. Justice itself demands that we feel a natural compassion for them, because animals on this earth suffer the way we do, and they need our help. "The righteous man has pity on his animal, but the heart of the wicked knows no mercy," says holy Scripture.³ The Lord God gave the clean animals to men to slaughter and cook and eat, but in the Law he forbids killing the lamb in its mother's milk.⁴ When a mother is aching over her newborn lamb, what cruelty it is to mix the nursing lamb's blood with her milk, until the poor mother, hurting with the tenderness nature gave her, cries out and calls for her lamb. In animals that tenderness lasts only a season, until the newborn lambs and calves are weaned. In a human parent it lasts to the grave. The civilized world of

Europe makes no such distinction. It eats the nursing lamb and the nursing calf alike and listens neither to Moses nor to natural pity. And yet, strangely, it puts a law on its hunters not to hunt in the season when the birds are raising their young. To me that looks less like compassion than like the anxious worry of "what shall we eat tomorrow." They are afraid those choice birds might run short at the tables of the gentry.

Compassion is such a great virtue, Tornik, that it does more than make us spare and pity our own household animals. It stirs a man's heart even toward the predators. Let me tell you a lovely fable that fits this idea. It is a true picture of what compassion is.

A young hind gave birth in the cave where she lived, and, I do not know how it happened, her young died. The poor hind leaves her dead fawns, goes out to wander the mountain forest, and comes on a den where two newborn wolf cubs are lying, faint with hunger. Perhaps their mother had gone out to take a sheep and the dogs had throttled her, and the cubs were left alone. The tender-hearted hind, pitying the wolf cubs with a mother's love, said to herself, my udder is full of milk, so what harm is there in nursing these abandoned cubs until they are grown?

There was a hermit living close by in that forest. Hermits, as you know, Tornik, are men of prayer who have withdrawn from the world, and they have little feeling for the sweetness of a parent's tenderness. Well, you foolish hind, says the hermit, you amaze me. How can you nurse those wolf cubs? Don't you know that when they grow up they will be wolves, and the first blood they drink may be yours? That is not what I am thinking about, answers the kind-hearted hind. I am only thinking of doing a good deed. What else can I do? I have milk and no fawn. These poor creatures have no mother and need milk. I have to be their mother and care for them. And tell me, brother hermit, is everything born of man born good? When they grow up, aren't they worse than any wolf?

That is a fable, Tornik. Now let me tell you something that really happened, something I saw with my own eyes, and you will see how far compassion can sometimes carry a man. We know a man will pity another man, or pity his own household animals. But we do not see a man pity the wolf, which is forever tearing his sheep.

When Hayrik was chosen Shepherd of the diocese of Mush,⁵ I went with him on the journey from Varag to Surb Karapet.⁶ We came to the village of Ziaret, a little way from the monastery of Glak. The men of that village showed Hayrik great honor. They set out cream with honey, butter with honey, roast lamb, and we ate and ate. What a day that was!

After the meal we saw that the sturdy young men of the village had taken a wolf alive. They had forced sticks into his jaws and between his legs and tied him tight, and they brought him like that and dropped him in front of Hayrik. Well, Hayrik, they said, give us our *bakhshish*.⁷ Just then the poor wolf turned his eyes toward Hayrik, and I saw how hard it hit him. He was deeply moved. He asked where they had caught the wolf. Near the village, they said. He had hidden in a corner of the sheep-cote wall so he could slip out at night, steal a sheep, and eat it. Hayrik said, what, is the sheep lawful for you and forbidden to the wolf? God created the wolf along with the sheep and gave him his allotted portion. You slaughter sheep freely and eat them. What harm is there in giving that poor pauper of the mountains his share too? Besides, you are slandering this wolf. He did not come to steal a sheep. He had heard there was a *matagh* in the village, a "Cross, be our help" offering,⁸ and he came to eat some of the *matagh*. Who knows how many days he had gone hungry, until, his strength gone, he barely dragged himself to the village, and you came up and caught him, and now you want a *bakhshish* as if you had done some great feat of courage. I will give you a great *bakhshish*. Take the poor wolf outside the village and let him go, and let him get on with his business. When the villagers heard this they started muttering to each other. Look at this, men. Our Hayrik has come

to our country as our shepherd, and he means to hand our sheep to the wolves. We caught one wolf with a thousand pains, and he tells us to let it go. Hayrik heard the grumbling and began on his wolf fables. Listen, villagers, and I will tell you a fable. A wolf spent seven days and seven nights ranging the hills and the gullies, and nothing fell into his paws. He saw he was going to starve, so he said to himself, let me go quietly, quietly down to the nearest village. Maybe God will give me some allotted portion there. The poor wolf, faint-headed, reaches a village in the dark of the evening and huddles down at the foot of a sheep-cote wall. He looks in through a crack in the wall, and there are the lamps burning and the sheep being slaughtered, and the dogs sprawled off to one side with their eyes fixed, waiting for their share.

At that the wolf's heart turned bitter, and he began to say to himself, you unjust men! If a wolf did this, what an outcry you would raise. You and your shepherds would hunt him down with dogs and clubs. And here I am, robbed and half starved, watching what you are doing. The wolf gets the name for it, and you are the ones eating the sheep. You have the faces of men, but the way you act, you are man-wolves. Don't you see those neighbors of ours, the real man-wolves, who come down in bands and carry off your whole flocks? It is only against us poor wolves that you and your dogs test your courage, and we ask for very little, and we have more conscience than you do.

The wolf's complaint and his verdict are perfectly just, my dear villagers. Wolves have to live on this earth too. You would like to see their line wiped out, but you should know that wolves are very useful to you. If there were no fear of wolves, you would never guard your sheep at all.

Hayrik's fable and these words went straight to the villagers' hearts. The young men said, Hayrik, we can see how much pity you have for this bound wolf. For your sake we will untie him and set him free. Give us our bakhshish. They took the bakhshish and they cheated Hayrik.

They carried the poor bound wolf out of the village, set the dogs on him, throttled him, and stripped off his pelt. Well done, villagers! And there is Hayrik on his feet, reading a pardon over the village's sheep-eating wolf.

I have told you this story, Tornik, but be careful. It is not an example to copy straight. I told it only so you would understand how completely compassion can take hold of a man's heart, so completely that he wants to spare even the predator.

Then how much more do our own working animals deserve our compassion! A farmer who earns his bread by tormenting and torturing his animals is hard-hearted and merciless, and that is why such men never eat their bread with a full stomach. Do you think the animals' crying and groaning does not reach heaven? Do not imagine that animals count for nothing and nobody before God. Haven't you read the book of the prophet Jonah? When the Lord God spared the wicked Ninevites, he spared the animals too, just as he spared the children who did not know their right hand from their left.⁹

It hurts me deeply, Tornik, and stirs my pity, to see how our village working people treat their own yoked animals, without conscience and without mercy, tormenting them under the whip until the marks of the blows show in stripe after stripe across the backs of animals that never make a sound. If God worked a miracle and opened the animals' mouths, as he opened the mouth of Balaam's ass,¹⁰ what an outcry and complaint they would raise against the cruelty of men! And isn't their silent groaning and lowing a cry in itself? The protest of the wronged reaper reaches heaven. Won't the protest of the reaper's fellow worker, the wronged and beaten animal, reach heaven too?

Sometimes I see a poor animal, its strength gone, the yoke still on its neck, collapse and roll in the very furrow. Watch how much whip it has to eat then. It cannot stand the blows, so in desperation it gets up, goes a

little way, and collapses again. It never occurs to the pitiless plowman to say, let me leave this poor animal alone for a while, let it graze and rest, and then I will bring it back and yoke it again. And some men are so pitiless that instead of the drover's whip or a green switch they use dry wood, and then it is not just the hide and the flesh of these speechless animals that break but their very bones.

The horse drivers and the donkey drivers treat their pack animals just as badly, and sometimes load them past their strength. And if the poor animal gives out under the load and sits down, or falls by accident, do you know what they do? They beat it without pity right where it lies under the load, to make the animal, crushed under all that weight, get up on its own. That is how the wretched creature ends up injured, in its back or in its leg.

Do you see, Tornik, how heavily men's cruelty falls on the poor animals? They have no protector and no advocate. Conscience and compassion are the only protectors an animal has, and even those are rare enough in the hearts of men.

My father used to tell me, Tornik, that there was once a governor in Van with a great natural compassion for animals. If he saw a man treating an animal cruelly, he punished him on the spot, and the punishments he handed out fit the offense, and they were entertaining too.

One day, on his way out of the city toward the town of Artamet,¹¹ he sees two horse drivers sitting comfortably at a spring, eating their bread, while their horses stand there still under their loads. He orders the loads taken off the horses at once, and the loads, as it happened, were barley. He fills the horses' nose bags full and has them hung from the horses' heads, and the loads he sets on the men's backs, one pack apiece. Until the horses have finished their barley, he says, you are going to stand on your feet exactly like this.

Another day, going out through the city gate, he sees two men riding one horse on their way to Aygestan.¹² To the governor the sight is outrageous. He orders one of the two down off the horse and sends him straight to prison. To the other he says, you are old, so I have spared you. Go and carry word about your friend, that he has been put in prison and will serve ten days.

Another day still, out walking beyond the city, he sees a man going along with a sack slung over his arm, and he is astonished to hear cats' voices coming out of it. He goes up and asks what is inside. The man can hardly deny it, since the cats can be heard. Agha, he says, they are thieving cats. I am taking them to turn loose in the city. You worthless creature, says the governor. I drive thieves out of the city, and you are carrying cats into it. He gives the order, they pull the poor cats out of the sack, and he has the sack pulled down over the man's head, and a policeman takes him by the hand and marches him off to prison. Everyone coming and going sees the man's disgrace, but thanks to the sack over his head no one can tell who he is. As for the freed cats, they go straight home and bring the household the news that their master has been taken to prison.

But ask yourself, Tornik. Did that compassionate man pity only tormented animals, and hand down his impartial judgments only for them? Didn't he put the same pity and the same even-handed judgment to work for wronged men as well?

Yes, Tornik, he did. When a man has compassion for animals, it is only natural for him to feel it even more for a fellow creature of his own kind, and to be moved to pity. And yet, who knows, the world being what it is, there may be men who put on a kind heart for show and sit in judgment over a cat to prove they love justice, while they let the case of the wronged man who cries out go past them. It is just how the hypocrite Pharisees of Christ's time would swallow the camel and strain the gnats out of their wine.¹³ They passed over the justice of God's law

and counted small, trifling things as righteousness.

People think, Tornik, that God the Judge takes vengeance only for wronged men. He does not. I have heard, and I have read in books as well, that the protest of the speechless animals also comes before God, and that God holds court and takes vengeance for them. Saint Ephrem the Syrian, that holy elder, confesses in his own words a sin of his boyhood, and it is written down in the story of his life.¹⁴

This is what he says. When I was a boy I was a wayward, restless, mischievous young rascal. One day I saw a cow in the field, in calf, lying down, near her time. I chased the poor cow, pelting her with stones, and gave her no peace to bear her calf. I pressed her so hard that I drove her into the forest. The cow dropped her calf and fell to the ground with the breath gone out of her, and there she stayed. In the night the wild animals ate the cow and the calf. Now, that cow belonged to a poor man. The thing did not stay hidden. It came out, and they took me and put me in prison. There were other offenders in that prison, telling each other their crimes. One would say, I killed an innocent man. Another would say, I robbed a rich merchant and killed him. And so on. They asked me too, boy, what is your crime? I told them about the cow. Oh, they said, you call that a crime? In the end the murderers were tried, taken out, and hanged. Me they did not sentence to death, because they spared my youth. They gave me a sound beating and let me out of prison. But those months in prison were real suffering. I could not sleep at all. The picture of the hunted cow was always in front of my eyes.

I decided I would have to do penance for that poor man's cow all my life. So I left home, and father, and mother, and everything else, and said, let me go to the mountain and become a hermit, and pay for the sins of my cruelty and my wrongdoing. Through that ordeal I came to my senses and understood the judgment of God, who takes vengeance for the animals too when we treat the speechless creatures cruelly.

Let this story be a lesson to you, Tornik. Never let it out of your mind. Always remember Saint Ephrem's story and the judgment of the hunted cow, and know and believe that the righteous God is judge for man and wronged animal alike.

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1. Psalm 8:6-7.
 2. Psalm 104:21.
 3. Proverbs 12:10.
 4. Cf. Exodus 23:19 (the kid not to be boiled in its mother's milk) and Leviticus 22:28.
 5. Hayrik is the author, Khrimian, chosen prelate ("Shepherd") of Mush in 1862, when he moved from Varag to the Mush country.
 6. Surb Karapet is the great monastery of St. John the Forerunner near Mush, also called the monastery of Glak (Glakavank), the most famous pilgrimage shrine of Turkish Armenia.
 7. *Bakhshish* is a gift, a reward for good news or good service (baksheesh).
 8. *Matagh* is the Armenian votive animal sacrifice, its meat shared out to the poor. It is offered with the cry "Cross, be our help."
 9. Jonah 4:11.
 10. Numbers 22:28.
 11. Artamet is a town on the southeastern shore of Lake Van, famed for its orchards.
 12. Aygestan, "the garden-land," is the orchard quarter of the city of Van.
 13. Matthew 23:24.
 14. The tale is told in the traditional Life and Testament of St. Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373).

CHAPTER XVII

Planting and Tending Trees

ԺԷ. Մշակութիւն ծառատնկոց

Dear Tornik, if we had been born thousands upon thousands of years ago, we would have seen this earth we live on covered all over with forest. And who had planted it? God the Creator, who spoke and it was. Not the trees alone, plants of every kind came up of themselves out of the earth's lap. Look at those dark mountains, and at these wide plains and valleys and gorges. Once, perhaps, they were all thick with forest.

It seems that the people of the first ages, who lived by nothing but wild hunting, had forgotten the craft of our First Father, whom the Lord God told to work the earth and to keep it.¹ The wild men of that time did not know how to provide for tomorrow, and they began to cut and burn the forests without any restraint. But God, who provides in advance, turned this earth of ours upside down in many places with earthquakes and hid forests beyond counting deep under the ground, like an inexhaustible treasure, for the generations of men to come. The clever generation of today, ransacking the globe and opening up the earth's deep places, found the treasure. And do you know what the treasure is, Tornik? Not gold and not silver, but black coal, which is more precious and more useful than gold, because the engines that drive the world's progress run on the power of steam, and steam is made from water by the blazing fire of burning coal.

So when men saw that the ancient forests God planted were being used up little by little, they set to work with every effort to raise forests by hand, and today the world of western Europe is full of cultivated forest, which supplies all the timber it needs, for buildings, for the countless wooden ships, and for laying out the roads of the steam-carriages.

But our eastern world is very poor in the wealth of forests. A few natural forests still stand, but they too are being cut without rule or restraint, and they are nearly gone. So alongside our field work we have to work at raising forests of planted trees. And do you know how much land the village people have for growing woodland, both on the flat and on the crumbling soil of the hills? Timber is as necessary to the farmer as bread is to keeping him alive. If he wants to build even a plain hut to shelter his family, he needs wood. And think what a great patriarchal family, running to forty or fifty souls, needs in the way of roomy buildings. Set aside the building of our houses, which takes poplar, aspen and willow. Our farm work needs hard timber of other kinds as well. Ash for the *gután*'s curved beam (the *esh*, "the donkey," as we call it) and for the share-head, elm for framing the body of a cart and for the axle-tree, and there is no counting the smaller tools, which are generally made of the hard woods. And as I wrote earlier, think how much idle time the village farmer spends getting hold of timber like this. He has to travel a long way to find it, bring it home, work it, and only then can he start on the job.

But enough of that, Tornik. You can see for yourself how beautiful and how cheerful the villages with planted trees are, and how much the trees add to the look of a village. Have you been to Artamet,² to that rich orchard and fruit-garden country? Never mind the forest trees that bear no fruit. Think how many kinds of fruit trees there are, apple, pear, and all the other sweet fruits, and the finest of them all is that red apple, unmatched in taste, in scent and in color, and so plentiful that it supplies the whole land of Vaspurakan.

For the village, planted trees have other uses too, and other pleasures. In summer they spread shade against the burning sun. In winter they shelter the village from the fierce north wind. And how pleasant it is for the village families, who sit under the trees in their free hours with their little ones, doing their handwork and enjoying

themselves. The nightingale and the starling sing from the orchard, the children chatter at their play below, and when the lambs skip and bleat as well, *vash!* how many sweet voices come together in the harmony of plain village life.

Orchards are not only for people, for their pleasure and their profit and the needs of their life. They matter greatly for the animals too. Fresh green shoots come up under the trees, and that is the only place where the calves of newly calved cows and the young foals of the mares should graze. And in the heat of a summer noon those tender young creatures rest on the green under the cool trees.

But it is not enough, Tornik, that orchards should decorate the edges of the village. If only our fields and croplands were planted with trees too, wherever the water-courses run and the springs come up. How much easier, how much more restful it would be, both for the laborers at work and for the tired yoke-animals. The moment they are unyoked in the heat of midday they begin grazing under those shady trees, and afterward they lie down and chew the cud. The water-loving buffalo calves, which cannot stand much heat, make a rush for the water as soon as they are out of the yoke, and if there is water enough they sit right down in it. The plow-boy gives them a good wash and then takes them to the pasture. And in that hour the tired laborers sit at the spring in the shade of a tree and start asking one another, what do you think the mistress has cooked for us today? You know how our laborers love a buttered dish and pilaf, and *madzun* strained through the bag.

Then they see the girl who brings the bread coming along, a sturdy girl with the load on her back. She sets it down, they open it, and the food is exactly what they wanted. The laborer's table is the green ground. They spread the *mezar*-cloth on it and lay out the thin baked loaves. They open the *madzun*-bag and beat the *madzun* with cold spring water in a *kot*, an earthenware or wooden bowl. Then they pick up their spoons, a spoonful of pilaf, a spoonful of *madzun*-buttermilk.

Okh, Tornik! You have eaten it. You know the appetite those hungry laborers eat with. They eat, and they bless the mistress of the house.

After the midday meal they put their heads down under the cool tree and sleep sweetly, so sweetly that a prince in his palace, on his feather bed, cannot sleep as restfully or as quietly. You do not know the reasons for that yet, Tornik, but you will find them out later, when you grow up and start taking an interest in the world.

So, my thoughtful Tornik, you have taken good note of how useful and how profitable planted trees are for the village people. Then get to work. Plant and tend, year after year, and increase the trees that belong to our house. Long ago I fenced in a field by our door and brought on a fine orchard. But you should not take pride in the trees I planted. It is far sweeter to plant new ones with your own hands, tend them, and take pride in those. And you should know that trees have cares of their own as well, planting, pruning, cutting back, and the rest. You do not need long lessons on the tending of trees. You have seen how your Papik takes a saw and a curved knife and stays out in the orchard, always cutting away the dead and unnecessary branches so that the branches that are left will grow better. The ground under the fruit trees should be dug over once every two or three years, and that work pays as well. First, when the soil is loosened, the roots of the trees grow stronger. Second, if you sow barley or some other grain there, you get a yield from the tree and from the ground under it at the same time.

Do you remember, Tornik, how some years ago the Vanetsis took up the growing of mulberry, and at first carried it forward with great success? A sudden piece of luck came their way. For a few years the Vanetsis made great profits simply by selling silkworm seed. The price of Van seed rose so high that they weighed it out against gold, because the seed of every other country had been ruined by a sickness of the silkworms.³

It pains me to tell you, Tornik, how the Vanetsis let that profitable business drop altogether. They convinced themselves at the start that selling silkworm seed was the only way they were going to profit. They could not see that it had been a stroke of luck and that the luck had passed, and they could not grasp that silk-growing does not rest on the seed alone but far more on the cocoons, because the real yield of mulberry-growing is the cocoon. Either you sell the cocoons in season, or you draw the thread from them and sell silk. And since silk is a light thing in itself but heavy in price, it suited the Vanetsis' trade perfectly, far as they are from the seaports.

It seems to me, Tornik, that the Vanetsis have no love for work that is fine and tedious and needs patience, work like turning the soil a cubit deep and planting the mulberry, digging around the plantings every year, building the silkworm-house, setting up the proper trays for the worms to work on, bringing mulberry leaves every day to feed them, going over the worms with a doctor's sharp eye and separating the sick from the healthy, and, when the worms start spinning their cocoons, preparing the little, little twigs for them, and so on and so on. And then, once the cocoons are formed, taking the seed you need and either selling the rest of the cocoons to the merchant as they are, or drawing the thread and winding it skein by skein into clean silk and tying it up. Okh, what a tedious, endless job! And so the lazy, ease-loving Vanetsi starts grumbling.

Look, Tornik. The Vanetsi calls silkworm-rearing a tedious, drawn-out job, when the whole of it barely lasts three months and then he has his yield, while he will plant a vineyard and wait seven years before he gets the first fruit from it. And in any case, all these many old vineyards of Van, did the present generation plant them? No. They were planted by the true vine-loving sons of the patriarch Noah, by our forefathers, our Papiks, and we enjoy them today.⁴ In the same way I have planted a vineyard, and I will die, and you will inherit it and enjoy

it, and later on, perhaps, you will boast and say, I planted this vineyard.

Here and now, Tornik, I am giving you a charge. Along with your other trees, do not forget the mulberry. The soils around our village suit it very well, because the mulberry does very well in sandy ground. But you must understand, Tornik, that the ordinary work of our farming keeps a man very busy. So when you want to push the growing of trees forward, it is best to hold back on the field crops themselves (the sowing of wheat, barley and the rest), so that you can get more out of the trees.

I have talked about the growing of orchards at some length, Tornik. You know how much your Papik loves a tree and a spring. Sometimes, tired from work, I go and sit in the shade of a tree. I set my back against the trunk and rest. I have grown old, Tornik. I need a staff now, a support for my old age. The patriarch Jacob called one beloved son of his the staff of his old age.⁵ I say the same to you. You are the staff of my old age, until I reach my last resting-place.

1. Genesis 2:15.

2. Artamet, a small town on the southeastern shore of Lake Van, famed through the whole Van country for its orchards and its red apples.

3. The pebrine blight that ravaged the silkworm stocks of Europe and the Levant in the 1850s-60s left Van's untainted silkworm eggs ("seed") briefly worth their weight in gold to buyers.

4. Genesis 9:20. Noah was the first tiller of the soil, and he planted a vineyard.

5. Of Benjamin, the child of Jacob's old age (cf. Genesis 44:20).

CHAPTER XVIII

The House and Life of the Village People

ԺԸ. Գիւղական ժողովրդի տուն եւ կեանքը

Dear Tornik, you have read holy Scripture, and you know that the old, old patriarchs had no fixed house or home. Their house was a tent that moved, here today, somewhere else tomorrow. The Arab tribes still live that way now. And not far from us, to the south, there are many tent-dwelling tribes, Kurds by race, who are called *köchers*, nomads. Their winter quarters are the wide warm plains along the borders of Nineveh and Babylon, where the snow does not fall heavily and the winter is not hard. They live under the tent, and their animals graze in the open all year round.

But in summer, when the heat turns fierce, all those tent-dwelling tribes move north with their many flocks of sheep to the cool mountain ranges of Korduk and the Taurus,¹ where there are springs everywhere and pasture without end. For three or four months they enjoy that free mountain life, and at the end of autumn they move south again to the warmer lowlands. That is why these wandering tent-dwellers own more sheep than anyone can count, and droves of other animals that cost them no trouble at all. No stable, no byre, no winter fodder to lay in. Because they keep to raising livestock, they grow richer at it than the village people do. And they enjoy the sweetest peace of the natural life along with it.

Are you curious, Tornik, where the people of the first ages learned to build a house and live inside it, sheltered from the cold in winter and from the sun's heat in summer? Who gave them the example?

They say men learned the art and architecture of house-building from the birds and the animals. They saw the birds set their nests in the

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trees. They saw the swallow build her clay nest against the side of the house-beam, the eagle keep his eyrie on the high crags he loves, and the blind mole, nesting underground, shape the earth he throws out into a little mound. Then there is the ant, that provident, insignificant little creature, who builds not just a house but a granary next to his burrow, where he gathers his winter stores. And the bee, that thrifty housekeeper, lays out her even, measured cells in wax so that we cannot say whether she is building herself a nest or a honey-house, and she does it with such care that human wisdom is amazed by it.

Yes, Tornik, men with reason learn a great deal from the small creatures that have none. Those born craftsmen are our teachers. Do you see that mischievous spider, who braces himself in the corner of the wall and works without stopping, drawing fine threads out of his own mouth and weaving a net to catch flies? That is where men learned the craft of the loom and of weaving cloth. And from the nightingale's trilling and the voices of the other sweet-singing birds, from the roar of the sea's waves, from the sound of running water, from the rustling of the forests breathing as one, taking a little here and a little there, didn't the song-makers put together so many wonderful modes and lessons of music?

Well, Tornik, your Papik has wandered off the track again, leaving the proper order of our lesson to ask where men learned to build houses and to sing and all the rest. Let's get back to the village houses.

You know, Tornik, that every class of people on this earth lives according to its own development. City people, who are more developed than we are, and whose taste has opened up as they developed, know how to enjoy a comfortable life, and they build to the measure of their taste.

But the village people, who have no development and whose taste is shut tight, find their little houses quite good enough. Yet is the peasant's

taste really so dull that he cannot build his house with even a little order to it? Watch how he answers me. Yes, I am a man too. I have some taste. I see the townsmen's fine houses, and do you think my soul does not want a fine house of my own? But then I think, I am poor, I am in debt, and for a poor man a hut is plenty. And so on. Meanwhile the rich householder reasons it out with his shrewd economy. If I make my house bigger, the guests will multiply and my expenses will double. And so on. The peasant householder's objection is fair enough, but underneath it lies the root cause I explained above. Along with their poverty, the village people are ignorant and have no taste. Because there are small things that could be put right at no cost at all, only a little work. And so I can show you this in a way you can see and touch, Tornik, so you look with your own eyes and take in the bitter, punishing hardship our village families live with in their daily work, let me give you an example. You see it all the time and you do not notice it. Your eye is used to it. You probably think this is simply how a village family has to live, or that it is their fate.

Get up, then, Tornik, and come with me to the house of our friend Brother Kirakos. It is exactly the hour when the village *tonirs*, the sunken hearth-ovens, are lit. Look. The tonir-house is full of smoke and fumes. The tonir is burning, and on the cross-iron over it stand the pots of *tanapur* and of the day's dish. On one side of the house two cradles are set, and the poor babies are crying, choked by the smoke, while their mothers think they are asking for milk. In one corner an old woman lies sick with the shivering fever, the ague. Now the tonir has burned down and the smoke has drawn off. The mistress of the house throws down her sitting-pad and settles at the rim of the tonir. One of the young wives of the house opens out the balls of dough on the tonir-slab and hands them over, and the mistress slaps them onto the tonir wall with the baking-pad. All this time the household mastiff lies sprawled in the doorway, paws out in front of him, his eye on the mistress, waiting for her to hand him the crust that comes out of the tonir.

It is midday, the daughter says to her mother. It is time, mayrik, I have to take the bread out to the workers. The bread and the food are made ready, and the brisk girl goes off to the field with the load on her back. And now the village *gzir*² comes in. The mistress has a guest. With a sigh she tells the young wife to break a few eggs and make him an omelet.

You see, Tornik, a villager's house is a patriarch's tent. The door is always open. And now the village poor start arriving, one after another. An old woman came shaking, stick in hand. Mistress, I would die for your soul, I caught the smell of the fresh bread and came. My orphan grandchildren are crying with hunger. Give me a loaf and a little soup to carry back to my little ones. The old woman took what she asked for and went off blessing the house. Another came, and took, and went, and so a good many came, and took, and went. Last of all came a shameless beggar who would not settle for one loaf. The mistress lost her temper, took the black poker of the tonir, laid it across his back, and drove him out of the house. Did you see that, Tornik? By the time the mistress finished her baking, half the bread was gone.

Now let me come back to this tonir-house, which would be very easy to improve. Do you see? The tonir is built in the middle of the house, and in the ceiling there is only one yerdik, a roof-hole, for the smoke to escape by, though with the house door open the smoke goes out through the doorway too. Suppose we move the tonir and set it in a suitable corner of the house. Over that corner we build a wide smoke-hood, and the hood is easy enough to make. Stand two slender posts, weave pliant willow between them, and plaster the gaps with straw and clay. On the roof, in the same line, we raise another hood, a cubit and a half high at least. Then watch how the smoke draws up, and the house is left entirely clear of it.

Well, Tornik, judge for yourself. What difficulty, what expense is there in this small improvement? So why doesn't the villager think of it?

Don't you know the reason? I have said it many times, and I will say it again. He cannot read and write. Letters and books are what open a man's mind and teach him to think. But do not be surprised at the unlettered villager, and do not blame him. Let's go to the city. Look at the householders of Van, every one of whom has built his tonir in the middle of his house too. There is only one difference. The townsmen's houses are high enough, and they have plenty of openings, not just in the ceiling but in the walls as well, so the smoke of the house draws out easily. But the ceiling is still black with soot. And when the house starts to leak in the rains, you will see the black drops ruining the floor and everything spread on it. Sometimes the very old houses drip in the spring even without rain, a silent drip, which is worse, because the floor coverings, the tonir-cover and the family's clothes all get stained with soot, and it is hard work to get that sticky soot-black out of the cloth and scrub it away.

So do not say to me, Tornik, the townsman can read and write, he is developed, he has seen the capital, Bolis,³ and taken his idea of cleanliness from there, so how is it he still cannot think of something and improve his own house? And if that is how things stand, what advantage does the lettered man have over the unlettered, when the way of life and the housekeeping stay the same? Let me answer you, Tornik. First, you should know that not every man who can read and write can run a household. Second, though the new generation of townsfolk has taken the incomplete schooling of today's schools, that is nowhere near enough to run our life well, because with that half-finished, skimming education we cannot work our minds hard enough to pull out the old, deep-rooted prejudices. Townsman and villager alike will go on living in soot-black houses, and they will say, our fathers and our grandfathers lived in these houses and we will live in them too. It means nothing to them that the family is suffering in the smoke and the soot, and that sometimes their eyes go dim with it.

When I say the townsfolk are developed, do not take me to mean they are really and truly developed and enlightened. If you gathered up all the intellectual light they have, it would not add up to one dim lamp. It is only that, next to the unlettered village people, they have a small advantage.

Tornik, the mind's eye of townsman and villager alike is still clouded, covered over with film. We do not see the things of the world straight and true. Like the blind man Jesus healed, we too see the people walking about as trees.⁴ To tell a tree from a man you need light and clear sight, and that comes only from education. As long as we have no light-giving grace of education and knowledge, our household life will stay just as it is. Learning, it seems, has decided that the dark, soot-black house is what we deserve, until the day the people's mind's eye opens and sees the light and can tell a man from a tree. And then, if we are still alive, we will come out of these soot-black houses into light and progress, and be free of that choking smoke and soot of ignorance.

That is all I will say about the village's plain buildings, Tornik. But the daily life of the peasant people is very wide, and it holds a great many other things. You, Tornik, were born into village life, so I leave its portrait to you, to study for yourself out of your own experience. Now I am going to talk about the village church, the priest and the people, which for you is a spiritual lesson.

1. Korduk is the mountain country of ancient Corduene (Kordvats), south of Lake Van toward the Bohtan country. With the Taurus it walls the highland off from Mesopotamia.

2. *Gzir* means the village crier and beadle, the headman's summoner, who also quartered official guests on the households.

3. Bolis is Constantinople.

4. Mark 8:24, the half-healed blind man of Bethsaida, who saw people as walking trees.

CHAPTER XIX

The Village Church and Priest

ԺԹ. Գիւղական եկեղեցի եւ քահանայ

Our churches wear the same face our village lives do, plain, bare, and weathered. If a handsome temple has come down from the old forefathers, stone-built and solid, that is a stroke of luck for the villagers. Some villages have a monastery right beside them. In the district of Rshtunik there is the monastery of Narek,¹ among the villages of Timar there is the famous monastery of the Holy Mother of God,² and there are others elsewhere. Monasteries like these serve the nearby villages as church and house of prayer, and that too is a great comfort.

But as a rule the village churches of the land of Vaspurakan are built of earth and timber. The walls go up in unfired brick, and the ceiling and roof are covered over with earth. The sanctuary and the altar are the only parts that amount to anything, and only then if they happen to be built of stone and lime. Don't be surprised that the villagers' churches are the wooden ones. What should surprise you far more is that in a city as famous as Van the churches are almost all timber too. Only a few have buildings old and stately enough to deserve the name, like the church of Surb Poghos in the middle of the city.

In the Aygestan,³ the church of Ayr-Haruyts had a fine old building. A few years ago, while they were renovating the church's timber porch, they ran the ancient building and the porch together. They wanted their church to look like the churches of Bolis,⁴ on the theory that the churches of Bolis preserve the ancient form and figure of the true Armenian temples. It is a pity, a thousand pities. What is left of those ancient temples is being pulled down one after another, churches are going up in foreign shapes, and altars are being fitted out with clumsy, tasteless *khachkals*, the carved cross-stands.

But enough of that, Tornik. Let me draw you a picture of our own village church. If the picture puts it in front of your eyes, that is enough.

Our village church is earth and timber like the rest, and a few years ago it was patched up, though just barely. Look at it. The altar is plain and unornamented, made of wood, with one roughly cut *khachkal* on it. The *vem*, the altar-stone, and the steps of the candle-stand are draped with a shabby, soot-blackened cloth. At the Liturgy two candles are lit, hardly more. The rest of the time a wooden three-legged lamp-stand does the work, with an earthen lamp on top, thick with oil and soot. And look how shapeless and crude the image of the Lord above the altar is. On the floor of the church and around the altar there is nothing but rush matting. Village churches mostly have no gallery, so the men stand in front and the women behind.

Never mind the shabbiness of the building. It means nothing before the universal glory of God, whose throne is heaven and whose footstool is the earth.⁵ Now for the moral picture. We have one old priest, and he can barely get himself to church, shaking, propped on his staff. His eyes went dim long ago, like the patriarch Isaac's,⁶ but he has much of the church's office by heart, and he reads it. He is a good priest, God-fearing, and the people love him. We had another priest too, decently schooled, quick, hardworking. But he grew rich, left the village, and went to the city. It seems growing rich is not a very good thing for a village priest, because money pushes him toward an easy life. When a man is ordained priest of a village church, he binds himself to it by written vow. And yet men like that find ways to break the vow, offering hollow, groundless excuses. Still, to speak straight and judge fairly, the village priests are often in the right themselves, when the people begrudge their spiritual officer the dues of his ministry, dues appointed by the holy fathers of the early church.

The proof is in front of us in our own day. The priests, like the people, are going into exile for bread, leaving village and church

orphaned while they drift for years in a foreign country. You should see them, Tornik. They wander through the graveyards of Bolis and wait there, hoping for a funeral, or hoping some *pandukht*, some man in exile for his bread, will come and have a grave blessed for his dead.

So the priest gives up shepherding the village's living people, because he cannot make a living from them, and goes looking for his family's bread among the graves of the dead. Blessed be the memory of the departed, who supply the priest's bread out of their graves. The graves of the dead have a fruitfulness of their own, there where men have fallen asleep in the Lord, in faith and in the name of Christ.

It seems to me, Tornik, that the leaders of the nation count the village people a no-people. They do not deserve a decent church. They do not deserve an educated, respectable priest for a shepherd. School, learning and education are held to be more than they need. They are not lucky enough to hear a *vardapet*⁷ preach even a few times a year. The village church lies far from the feet of the diocesan visitation. In short, they are cut off from every spiritual comfort. No one could describe how little their condition counts. Everything is concentrated in the cities, where the Prelate's see is set for the whole diocese. You would think the Prelate was the townsfolk's private monopoly, or a shepherd they had hired, since he attends to the townsfolk and no one else. City sheep are the only sheep he has to pasture, and the village sheep out on the plain can be left to the wolves. The Prelate sees a villager's face on one occasion only, when the man comes before him with a petition and a pleading look. The easy life and the love of glory have quenched the care and the zeal of our spiritual shepherds, and I think the cause of it is the townsfolk and the life of the city.

One slender consolation is left to the village people, the monasteries, above all in the province of Vaspurakan. The monastery *vardapets* come out from time to time to visit the villages of the diocese. They come to collect the monastery's dues and fruit-tithe, true enough. But

there are hardworking monks among them who do more than discharge the duty of the visit and give the people some spiritual comfort. They also settle any number of odd village matters that have come up, and now and then they act as peacemakers and judges in the quarrels and disputes. The pity is that monks that conscientious are very rare.

This lesson could open a very wide subject for me. But Papik is a layman and a worker of the soil, and I have no right to step outside the round of my farming lessons. Spiritual business must be left to the spiritual men. They are the people's physicians. Can they not cure their own sickness? Let them think about it, speak, write, and prescribe the medicine and the cure.

Now, Tornik, let me move on and talk about how the village people might at least make some small progress, and improve their condition enough to keep pace with the times.

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1. Narekavank, the monastery of Rshtunik on the southern shore of Lake Van, famous as the house of the poet St. Grigor Narekatsi.
 2. Timar, the district along the northeastern shore of Lake Van, across from the isle of Lim.
 3. Aygestan, "the garden-land," the orchard quarter of the city of Van.
 4. Bolis, that is, Constantinople.
 5. Isaiah 66:1.
 6. Genesis 27:1.
 7. A *vardapet* is a celibate priest-doctor of the Armenian Church, licensed to preach.

CHAPTER XX

Improving the Village People's Condition

Ի. Գիւղական ժողովրդի վիճակին բարւոքումն

It makes a man despair, Tornik, to look at the condition of the village people and the bitter, laboring life they lead. He turns it over in his mind and asks himself, can it really be possible for the lot of our plain-dwelling, land-working people to change? Can their life get better? Can they too begin, step by step, to move forward?

You have to understand, Tornik, that the condition of the world's nations and peoples never changes all at once. It happens in the natural order, by degrees. Progress started in the west, and it has only now come in at the eastern door. A long time will pass before it gets through that door and reaches our own country. Progress begins with the cities first, and only then draws near the villages. But the cities have only just begun their ABC. The primary schools have all been opened for the little children, who are still learning to read and write, with a little Christian teaching, a little arithmetic, and a little studying of the map of geography. And the child, who does not yet know the places around his own home, off he goes and lands in the capitals of America and China.

In the chief villages of Vaspurakan a start has already been made at opening primary schools, and the village children have begun, more or less, to learn their reading and writing. The village schools can only keep their terms in winter, because in summer the villager badly needs his ten-year-old boy. Who is going to graze the calves and the lambs? Let the little boys do the plow-boy's work. From spring to autumn, in every branch of the farming, the service a boy like that gives is worth four hundred dahekans in wages. Progress in our country is a newborn baby, and a great deal of time has to pass before it is baptized in the font of the school's enlightenment, grows day by day, and becomes a man.

Do not imagine, Tornik, that the child of education grows as fast as the child a mother bears. Twenty years are enough for a natural birth to reach its full growth, but the growth of progress and education takes long centuries. Do you know how many centuries ago Europe started out, and how she has only now reached the level she stands at?

Still, it is a great piece of luck for the generation we live in, because Europe, with grinding labor and enormous sacrifice, leveled and opened that road of progress, made ready all the elements of learning and science, and set them out like a table in front of us. The word of the Gospel fits this luck well. "Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."¹

So won't you say, Tornik, what do we need all that work and labor for now? Let's just sit down at the table, laid and ready, and eat.

That is very bad reasoning. Did you think the table was the *tanapur*, the yogurt soup, and the dinner our mistress of the house has cooked, so that we can pick up a spoon, sit down and eat? No. It will take great effort and great labor, long nights and hard discipline, before we can eat the bread of the table Europe has laid, because that bread grows in the field of the school. What do you say, Tornik? Shall we not plow, not sow, not tend the crop, not reap, not thresh, not grind the wheat, not knead the flour, not fire the *tonir*, the sunken clay oven, not bake the bread, and then sit down, without any of that sweat and labor, comfortably, at our ease, and eat our bread? You have heard in the Gospel that the sparrows are fed without plowing and without working for it.² Come now, you foolish Tornik. Have you never watched a sparrow work? Do you think that scrap of a bird has no hard labor of its own? Don't you see how it goes and comes a thousand times over to keep its brood alive, carrying straws to build the nest, laying its eggs, hatching its young, going back and forth without a stop, finding little worms and bringing them to the nestlings until their wings are grown? And then watch how hard it works to school its young, so they learn to

fly.

Do you see it, Tornik? There is nothing in nature that does not work. Bird, beast, creeping thing, everything that lives and moves works to keep itself alive. And never mind the creatures of dry land. The fish of the sea and the countless swimming creatures of every kind in that watery world work and struggle just as hard to stay alive.

The speechless animals of the world learned it from nature once and for all. God the Creator brought them out of the school of His making already able to find their food and live, without lessons and without education.

But man, created a reasoning creature and ruler over all the animals, cannot get his bread without school and without education. Yes, the people of our country, ignorant and unschooled for the most part, do manage to get their daily food, in a bitter and grinding way, and they eat their bread in hardship and distress. But there is no possibility at all of their having even a little comfort in their lives. They cannot know the economy of their own lives, or how to run house and family with rule and order. They cannot know the ways of the world and the terms on which people live together, or say for certain what is good and what is bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice. They cannot tell, with any exactness, truth from falsehood, justice from injustice, honor from disgrace. And what matters most, they cannot know the Christian faith they profess, the supreme commandments of holy Scripture and the Gospel, and what a Christian's duties are toward God, toward his neighbors and his household, toward the church, toward the nation, toward the state. All these most necessary kinds of knowledge are what the schoolroom teaches us. So the first and fundamental condition for changing the present state of the village people is school and education. Now say it yourself, Tornik. To found a school you need a man, and along with the man, money. Where is the man, where is the money, and where is the trained schoolmaster? Out of the threshing floor, or out of

the winepress?³ The state of the village people is plain enough already. They have no mind to think with, and they cannot so much as understand the word education. And suppose you say, let the townsman help, since all his trade and all his profit come by grace of the village people. Yes, the townsman. He cannot lend a hand with money for the education of the working people, and worse, his spirit is cold and indifferent even about the education of his own children. Here is an example close at hand, the famous city of Van. Ask how much the Vanetsi spends in a year on his schools. I will not talk about that. I will spare him. I will say only this much. For the most part the Vanetsi educates his boys and his girls on the paltry candle money and oil money vowed to the church. He is not in the habit of paying a school fee, and if you ask him for one he scowls. Press him, and he takes the boy out of school.

But Tornik, we do not need help from the townsfolk. Long life to the village people. They pay the state its dues, and they provide for all those guests coming and going. Can they not keep one plain schoolmaster, a man who would be satisfied with very little pay?

We have bread, we have butter, we have cheese and the other things that come from the milk. Our schoolmasters want very little. They will be content with *zhazhik*, the whey-curd of the village table. All that is needed is someone to take charge and set things in order, someone to urge the common people on and lead them onto the road of education. And whose sacred duty is that? First the diocesan Prelate's, and second the monastery *vardapets*'.⁴

But here is the pity of it, Tornik. Our Prelates nowadays have turned into a kind of political official. The real ministry of the church, the school, education, learning and the rest, has been laid on the shelf. And who is to blame for it, the people or the Prelate? Our judgment is that the Prelate is to blame, because he is a shepherd, a minister of the Gospel, and nothing else but a spiritual servant of Christ's church.

But look what has happened. The people have made their Prelate's spiritual office into a thing of the flesh. They do not ask the Prelate to open their shut eyes by a miracle so that they can see what there is in the world, or to heal the sicknesses of their souls. They ask one miracle and one only. Let the Prelate bless five loaves, the way Jesus did, and feed five thousand men.⁵ And so the hungry people's question of bread has beaten down God's word of life, the word the Prelate is there to preach and serve out. How pitiful the people's blindness is, Tornik. It makes them look more to blame than the Prelate. And yet who can pass judgment on them? The people are choked by the problems of staying alive and hemmed in by hardship, so they look to the Prelate for every remedy. Of course they look to him, as long as they are ignorant. They have no learning, they cannot speak for themselves, they do not know the law of the land, so naturally they take the Prelate for the go-between and the advocate of their cause.

So the matter comes back again, Tornik, to the monastery vardapets, who are free men. They carry a great obligation, and they owe it to the village people to work for them with complete self-devotion. Their work is to go from village to village, to preach, to teach, to speak in a plain, familiar way the people can follow, so that they grasp what a school means and what the education of their children means.

A visiting vardapet who does that will not only found village schools. He will educate the village's young men, the men in their prime, and even the worn-out old ones, whose schoolhouse is the church. Let the vardapet come often on his visits. Let him speak, go back over his sermons and the meaning of the Gospel he has read, explain, set out God's commandments, and lay the table of the word and the bread of life in front of the hungry people, so that they eat and are filled.

The village people are very old in the Christian life, but look at how they live now and you will see they have turned back into a newborn child at the breast, and the picture of their life is ignorance and rusticity.

Their teeth have not come in yet, so solid food is not for them, meaning fine lessons and sermons. They need to be fed on milk, something they can taste with pleasure and digest. It is true that what a man learns in childhood is the best grounded and the firmest. I only wish I had had the luck to go to school as a boy and get a proper education myself. What I know, and what I am telling you in these lessons, I learned when I was already a grown man, and it does not come to much. Only by listening, and by reading books, have I come to know a little about the things of the world. You know, Tornik, that every book is a schoolmaster in itself to the man who reads it. The writers have died and gone, but the writing has stayed alive. There are books that never die. Thousands and thousands of years can pass, and they will still be talking to us.

I am writing these few lines, Tornik, so you understand that men well on in years can still learn their necessary lessons and be educated, provided the man teaching them gives himself to the work, tireless, always talking, never discouraged, persistent and patient. I saw the trial and the proof of it with my own eyes. Let me tell you about it, Tornik.

About twenty-five years ago, under the shelter of the church of Surb Lusavorich in Galata in Bolis,⁶ a new kind of educational undertaking was started. The man who started it was a fine, tireless, hardworking man named Ghazaros Kristostur. It is a great pity. He died two years ago, but he kept the work going without a break until the day he went into his grave. And what was the undertaking? A Sunday class for the education of the *pandukht* porters, men from the provinces living in exile for their bread. Yes, he opened it, and he made a success of it. You should have seen how, on Sundays and feast days, our *pandukht* brothers left the coffeehouse and the other places of amusement and poured into the classroom, and how Mister Kristostur, a schoolmaster without a salary, started them at the letter Ayb and gave out his plain lessons. He was no trained teacher, but he taught in a manner and style

so easy that these porters, who were supposed to be thick-witted, took in everything he said without the least trouble. And in a short time our porters, rough peasants, turned into men who knew something. They learned a good deal of the Armenian language, grammar, the history of holy Scripture, Christian doctrine and lessons from the Gospel, arithmetic, calendar reckoning and the rest.

Do you know how this fruitful undertaking ended, Tornik? Once the porter had gotten the taste of learning and his mind had opened a little, he felt and recognized his own worth. He learned that a man is not a beast made to carry loads. God created man a prince, the ruler of the animals. So the porter threw the pack-saddle, the semer, off his calloused back and went and found work that suited his worth. Some of those porters even took posts as private clerks, and some went home to their own country and became schoolmasters in the village schools.

Gratitude obliges me to remember this and to say it. While I was in Bolis I went again and again to listen to that self-devoted man, and his lessons, above all the ones on counsel and morals, were a real education and a great benefit to the pandukhts of the provinces. God rest his soul, he was a preaching vardapet without cowl or crozier. He knew nothing about method. He had no orator's tongue, and he could not say a thing briefly, touch it once and move on. He would talk and talk, plowing away at the fallow ground of his porter pupils until he had broken it up, sown the grains of his lessons and bedded them in. Blessed be his memory, and may the Lord God pay that tireless laborer his wage.

I have told you this true story as proof, Tornik, so that you and the village people can be convinced that grown men too can be educated and can learn, provided there is a teacher who gives himself to the work, above all when he teaches and works at the same time and offers his own person to the people as an example.

And where are men like that? How rare they are for the peasant people. And where would they suddenly come from? Out of the desert, like John the Baptist?⁷ Or will the Lord God, in His care for His people, bring out a prophet from among the shepherds, out of the school of His grace, the way He once did for the people of Israel?⁸ As long as we have no settled, well-ordered training schools to raise learned and educated successors, the people's condition will stay exactly as it is.

The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, Jesus says. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.⁹ We neither ask nor beg. And yet the Lord God, pitying our wretchedness of His own accord, does now and then bring out a small laborer, a visiting shepherd, for our harvests. Der Daniel vardapet is such a man, of the brotherhood of the monastery of Varag, who for ten years and more has shepherded, with complete self-devotion, not only our village of Archak but all the villages around it, near and far. His visiting feet knew no rest. He was forever on the move. That tireless laborer did more than sow the seed of the Gospel and speak moral counsel. He taught lessons in village farming as well, in a style so plain, so clear, so easy to follow that we thick-witted peasants could take in every word of it. He built and established our school at Archak and at the same time arranged revenues to keep it going, and in many other villages too he built churches and founded schools. Daniel vardapet's own life was altogether plain, and he wanted very little. He ate at the peasant's table, which usually meant *tanapur* and *madzun*, our curdled yogurt, and he ate it without a word of complaint, and he would say, for a man in orders this is enough and more than enough. His spirit was free of the love of possessions and clear of the disease of greed. He had pity in him. His heart went out to the wretched, and he liked giving better than taking. He had a steady will. Whatever he set his hand to, he worked to carry forward with an unflagging spirit. He was not bound by prejudice, and though he had no great learning and no widely cultivated mind, he had a real gift for the progress of the times. In the end, Daniel vardapet



was the one visiting shepherd the village people had, and that is why the people loved him, and why he loved the village people even more.

If only the church had more self-devoted laborers like that for our plentiful harvests. Then you would see, Tornik, how the condition of the village people would change and improve.

That brings these general lessons to an end. Now the time has come for me to speak, and to tell you the thing that concerns your own life in particular, and our family.

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1. John 4:38.
 2. Cf. Matthew 6:26.
 3. 2 Kings 6:27, "If the Lord does not help you, where am I to get help for you? Out of the threshing floor, or out of the winepress?"
 4. A *vardapet* is a celibate priest-doctor of the Armenian Church, licensed to preach.
 5. Matthew 14:17-21.
 6. Surb Lusavorich, the church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Galata, the port quarter of Constantinople where the migrant porters (hamals) from the Armenian provinces gathered.
 7. Matthew 3:1.
 8. Cf. Amos 7:14-15, the herdsman taken from the flock to prophesy.
 9. Matthew 9:37-38.



CHAPTER XXI

Tornik's Wedding

ԻԱ. Թոռնիկին հարսնիք

Well, Tornik, I have grown old, and your mayrik has grown old too. Who is going to be master and mistress of this house, to earn for it and keep it? So let me give you the good news. The time has come for you to marry. You are past twenty now, I think, and you know the old patriarchal custom of the villagers. They marry their children early, so that the house will have workers coming up in it.

You can see there are only the two of us, and that we run the whole farm with hired laborers. Wouldn't it be better to have workers from our own household as well?

Never mind that, Tornik. Your mayrik and I both want to see your crown and your *psak*¹ before we die. That is the one thing grandfathers and fathers and mothers want, to see their children and their children's children, who are the fruit of God's blessing. When God blessed our first parents, Adam and Eve, He said, "Increase and multiply, and fill the earth."² But our house is empty, Tornik. There is not one child in it for me to pet and to love. The joy and the gladness of a family come from those dear, tender little ones. Children are a house's natural musicians. They play, they chatter, they cry, they laugh. The small living things are always in motion and never keep still. And what a delight it is for parents who love their children to see them ringed around the table, as David says, "Your children like young olive shoots around your table."³

You know, Tornik, that marriage is a law God laid down to keep the human race going. If you do not marry, the name of Papik's house and our family will be wiped out. You have to marry, build up our family life, and keep the line of the house alive.

It is true that a townsman thinks long and hard about marriage, but the peasant is not in the habit of thinking about it, even when he is as poor as a man can be. We have a saying about that. They tell of a poor villager who had nothing but one little donkey. One day, talking things over with his wife, he says, look, our boy has come of age. How are we going to marry him? And since mothers are the keener and the quicker to get their children married, which is only natural, she answers her husband, let us sell the donkey and marry the boy. Ah, what are you saying, woman? Don't you know that little donkey is our one hope and our whole support? We have no plowing and no sowing. I load brushwood on him, take it to the city, and sell it. That donkey is the only way we find our daily food. Oh, man, you think too much. God is merciful. Let us marry the boy, and God will give him his bread. And who knows, the luck of our house may turn, and instead of a donkey we may find ourselves owning a horse.

God be praised, Tornik, our house is full of good things, and we have no need to sell a donkey or a buffalo. Everything we want is at home. We will kill that great ox of ours, set the *harisa*⁴ boiling, and let the whole village eat. Do you remember which ox I mean, Tornik? One day when you were at the *gutan*, our great ox-plow, you said, Papik, the furrow is running crooked. And I told you, I know, Tornik. The crooked furrow comes from our ox. You do not know the ways of the world yet. Dumb oxen are not the only ones that bend a furrow crooked. Think how many men there are who crook the furrow, whose work and whose lives never run straight at all. It is because of those crookers of furrows that the world's business goes crooked. I will not tell you, my simple Tornik, how many furrow-crookers there are in this village alone. Now, by killing our ox, we are rid of the plague of the crooked furrow. Let us pray God to rid us of the plague of crooked men.

I know, Tornik, that you are talking to yourself inside your head. Papik has sat down to make a speech about my wedding, he says the

wedding dinner is ready and all the rest of it, but he has not said where my wedding clothes are, or who the girl is that is promised to Tornik.

You foolish Tornik. Don't you remember, in the very first of my lessons, that I told you I had brought a suit of good broadcloth back from Stambul, and that I have kept it in the chest to this day? That will be your bridegroom's outfit. Only, once the wedding is over, you must take it off, lay it back in the chest, and wear it on feast days alone. You are a working farmer. Trousers of homespun *shal* are what suit you.

As for the girl you are promised to, let me tell you now and set your mind at ease. You know Murat *hamban*, the headman of our village. He is the one who will be our marriage-kin. His is a patriarchal house, and the whole family are good, harmless people. Headman Murat has a daughter of marriageable age named Shushan, a very modest girl, a good housekeeper and a hard worker, and you have surely seen her often enough. Our village families were *alafranga* long before Frankland was,⁵ because the life of the village people is what survives of the old patriarchal life.

There. Now you know all of it. Perhaps it had never crossed your mind, because you are a simple, straight-thinking boy, and Papik's sharp eye was always watching over you. Now get moving, Tornik. Whatever I tell you, do it quickly. There are only six days left. On Monday morning, in our village church, in front of the holy altar, facing the Liturgy, with the Gospel and the cross, the mystery of your crowning will take place. Send word today to Mkho the *naghara*-drummer and Mrdo the *zurna*-piper.⁶ You know that a village wedding of ours has no flavor without them. And now take our big donkey and two wineskins, Tornik. Go quickly to the village of Shahpaz, to that friend of ours, buy twelve *litras*⁷ of wine, and bring it back. But make sure they mix no water into the wine. The people of Shahpaz are not simple like us. Living close to the townsfolk, they have learned to adulterate. And what are the poor souls to do? When the

townsman piles the interest higher, they mix water in too, when it is wine they are handing over instead of interest.

That reminds me. Let me tell you something to wonder at, Tornik. One day at the end of autumn I went to the Prelacy of Van, and I found a case going on there between a townsman and a villager. I sat down and listened. The townsman had brought a little jug of wine. He filled a cup and handed it to the Prelate. Holy Father, he said, drink this and tell me. Is it wine, or is it water? The Prelate tasted it. Brother, he said, it looks as though a good deal of water has been mixed into this. Then the usurer of a townsman told his story. I have so many thousand dahekans out on loan to such and such villagers, he said, and that villager who is in my debt brings me flour sometimes, and sometimes *shira*, the grape-must, instead of the interest, and I take it against the interest account. This autumn he brought me fifty litras of must, and in all innocence I filled my jars with it. You must understand, Holy Father, I am a man who loves his wine, and I could not wait for the must to finish fermenting so that I could drink the new wine. I kept going to look at the jars, and I saw they were not working. What is this? I said. New wine has to ferment. And then I found out what a simpleton I had been. The peasant had cheated me and mixed water into the must. I am no scholar, but this much I know. Watered must does not ferment. That is my complaint, and I beg you, Father Prelate, to see my case judged straight.

The villager was called in, and he began with this confession. I mixed no water in, he said. It may be that the water mixed itself in, because the water of the channel runs under the wall of our must-house, and we have a drain-hole there for washing the must-house out. It happened to be open, and the water ran into the must-pit. You tell it well, my son, said the Prelate, but you are not telling it straight. If the water had run in by itself, all the must would surely have turned to water. But the water in this wine has been mixed in by measure. And leave that aside. If you knew such an accident had happened, why did you take watered

wine to your agha?

Holy Father, I would die for your soul. Listen to me, let me confess my sin honestly, and I beg you to judge honestly too.

Last year I brought the agha fifty litras of flour. I had weighed the flour myself beforehand. You know that the weighing-stones in the villages are a good deal heavier than the city's stones. We did that on purpose, knowing that when our goods go to the city they always come out short. And what did our agha do? He fetched some shapeless lump of a stone in from the yard, set it on the balance, and told me, this is one litra. You know how quickly a simple peasant believes a townsman. The agha began to weigh the flour, and he weighed it heavy, and heavier still, and there you are. His crooked balance brought my flour out five litras short. For the love of God, agha, I said, my flour is a full fifty litras. No, he said. Would I cheat you? That is what he said, and he counted it as forty-five. That shameless robbery sat like a pain in my heart, and I could not forget it. I made up my mind to get the same back out of the agha, so I mixed water into the must. And I did right, because our agha waters his wine anyway, so that it will not go to his head.

There, Father Judge. I have confessed my sin with an honest heart. Now make your judgment with an honest mind. Which of us is guilty, the agha or I? The one thing I am guilty of is that I did not bring the matter of the flour before your court, because I know from experience that when a townsman and a peasant go to law, the townsman wins the case. Who does not know that? And you know the reasons for it perfectly well, Holy Father. What more can I say?

Do you see, Tornik, how the villagers' eyes are beginning to open, slowly, slowly? But I have a warning for you, Tornik. Don't take this story as your model and copy the clever villager, setting fraud against fraud, because that goes flat against God's commandment. And there is this too. Once you learn to cheat, it becomes a trade with you, and a

habit. Then you will not only be trying to trick the man who cheated you. You may very well deal the same way with an honest man. Better to take the wrong and the loss yourself than to wrong another man and do him harm. And better still, stay awake, keep your eyes open, and neither cheat nor be cheated.

I know, Tornik. Here I am giving you advice, and inside your own head you are saying, Papik has forgotten all about our wedding. From the wine question he has spun off another question, and he is making long, long speeches over my head. No, Tornik, no. A man about to marry needs a great deal of advice. Did you think your old Papik was rambling, and had forgotten the great matter of the wedding? No. Today is Saturday, you have brought the wine and delivered it, and everything is ready.

Tonight is the *aghpanstum*, the bridegroom's eve. All the young men of the village will gather, take the new bridegroom into the middle of them, and play and laugh and celebrate until it is light. Tomorrow is Sunday, and all the people of the village, great and small, men, wives, brides, girls, old women, with their little ones, will fill our wedding house. That is how a village wedding works. The door stands open. It is no townsman's wedding, where they shut the door and keep things so quiet that the mice in the rafters never hear of it.

This evening, toward dark, we go for the bride, I and all the great *hambans* of the village. We will bring the bride and set her down in the house. She will sit veiled on the *takht*, the raised divan, with the *harsnkuyr*, the wedding-sister, beside her like a guardian angel.

When the sexton strikes the *kochnak*⁸ in the dark before dawn, we will go to church, all of us together with the neighbors. And believe me, the church is a paradise of Adam for you, where God has come down. He will set your crown on you and bless it by the priest's hand. Think of it this way. Until today you had been asleep in your life, and now

suddenly you wake, you open your sleep-heavy eyes, and a new Eve, a Shushan-lily, has blossomed at your side. The priest puts hand into hand and says, "He took the hand of Eve and gave it into the right hand of Adam,"⁹ and the rest of it. And in your own mind you say what our great forefather said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,"¹⁰ and the rest. The priest will read the other prayers of the mystery over you. He will take promises from your mouth and from the bride's, the whole people will stand as witness, and by God's written law the two of you will be bound to each other so fast that death alone can undo it. No hand in the world can untie it. Jesus made the Father's bond faster still in His Gospel, and said, "What God has joined together, let no one separate."¹¹

When the crowning is over we come out of the church, and then the rejoicing takes its turn. The zurna and the naghara strike up and cry the news to the world like a town crier. Tornik and Shushan are married, and today is their wedding feast. Our brave young men begin the dry-stick play. Eh, Tornik, instead of the old steel shield, each of them winds his aba cloak or his short jacket around one arm, and two by two they fence all the way home. In front of the door they kill a sheep. That is a *matagh*, a votive offering, for the long sunlit days of the bridegroom and the bride.

It comes back to me here, Tornik, so let me tell you. Forty years ago, when Hayrik was getting married, I did what villagers do. I took a butter-cake, some roasted meal and a yearling lamb, and went to the wedding. When Hayrik the bridegroom was coming home from church, it came into my head all at once to make my lamb a *matagh* in front of him. I set the lamb on the ground to kill it. Hayrik called out from the back of his horse, do not kill it, do not kill it. But Papik had been drinking that day. His head was turned. He had become a crooked peasant. I drew the knife, the blood spurted, and then I was sorry, because I saw Hayrik's eyes fill, and he began to cry like a boy. They

brought him down from the horse and took him into a room, where he was badly shaken and wept, and the wedding house turned into a house of mourning for him. From that day I understood how much tenderness Hayrik has for animals. And who filled his heart with so much compassion? He confesses it himself, in one of the dedications of his Discourse of the Cross. It was his teacher, his late uncle, Khachik agha Khrimian.¹² And who had filled that man's heart? The Gospel, which he read constantly. He knew no other book.

Now it is dinner time. The hour of the wedding harisa has come, and the wedding guests are hungry. Spread the felts and let them sit down, children, great and small, rich and poor. There is no upper rank and no lower here. This is Papik's house. Great mistress of the house, give the order to ladle the harisa into the big *matrat* bowls, bring them, and set them on the table. My dear neighbors and friends, all you people of the village, old Papik is making you a speech. Give me a cup of wine. Papik owes the first cup to the life of our sovereign, the king of this land, who provides for his faithful subject people, governs them and keeps them. Then let us drink to the life of our king Tornik, who is made a king today¹³ and will be a plowman tomorrow. And let us not forget the life of our bride Shushan, who is made a queen now, and tomorrow will be the house-building, hardworking bride of Papik's house.

That leaves the cup to your own lives, my dear wedding guests of the village. Thank you for honoring Papik's house and giving glory to my Tornik's wedding. I pray the same comes to your children and your grandchildren.

Now the harisa dinner is finished, and the wedding is finishing too. Out into the yard with you. Take your places in the motley *gyond*, the round-dance ring. Boys, fill that great stone mortar of ours with wine and set the big earthen jar on top of it. Then let the young men of our village ring themselves around the mortar, dance the round, and sing.

Papik, Papik, light to your eyes,
 Tornik has been made a king,
 Mamik, Mamik, light to your eyes,
 Shushan has come to you a bride.
 Long life to Shushan and Tornik,
 and may they grow old side by side,
 may they bud and flower like the lily,
 with children and children's children.
 May Papik's house grow and prosper,
 may Tornik be a great householder,
 and may Papik be long of days,
 and see his grandson's children.
 May he live the measure of the patriarchs,
 his white hair flowering like snow,
 may he come to a deep old age,
 and die, and go into the kingdom.
 Then let us eat his last soul-meal,
 and remember him, and bless his memory.

Long life to you too, my well-mannered village brothers. You have eaten the wedding meal, and now at the end you would like to eat my soul-meal as well? You are quite right to. Our learned men in the city suppose that peasants know nothing of philosophy. How natural your longing for my soul-meal is, since the soul-meal is always the natural sequel of the wedding meal. With the wedding meal people come into the world. With the soul-meal they go out of it. May God grant it as your kind wish would have it.

But Papik has advice for you, friends. Work with your own sweat, so that every day, at your own family table, you can eat your fill. Wedding meals and death's soul-meals do not fill a belly. Leave the soul-meal to the poor wretches, and above all to the priests, who are always waiting for your soul-meal, since you begrudge them their dues and do not pay them. To speak plainly, our priests live more off the dead than off the

living.

Well, my dear wedding guests, the wedding is over, and the eating and drinking are done. The wineskins are empty. The mistress of the house sends word that there is no bread left in the trough and no butter in the jar. Only a little is left at the bottom of the harisa cauldron, and that is the poor people's share.

Now, if you please, come and kiss old Papik's hand, wish Tornik and Shushan long sunlit days, say your farewells, and go home to your houses. I know you have gone without sleep, and drunk deep as well. Look, you have drained that huge mortar of its wine. A man who goes home from a wedding, they say, is heavy-headed. Sleep soundly tonight, and in the morning, the moment the dark turns to light, out to the field, out to the field.

And think about this. If you do not work at the plowing and the sowing, and do not bring the field's yield home, you will not be able to crown your children when they are grown. Can there be a wedding out of an empty house? Papik prays that God will make your work fruitful and fill your houses with plenty, so that you too can hold weddings, see the crown and the *psak* of your sons and your grandsons, and be comforted.

There, Tornik. The wedding guests have scattered, and now it is just you and I, Mamik, and the new bride Shushan. One single grain has been added to the small number of our family. God has sown that one grain like a grain of wheat in our family field, and you will see, Tornik, how many child-grains spring up from that one mother-seed. One day you will see the house filled with boys and girls, who will open their mouths and cheep like fledglings and shout, Papo, bread, we want bread! People believe and say that the Creator gives every creature He has made its allotted portion. Yes, we believe it. But the Lord God first prepared the portion and the bread, and made man afterward. And that

portion is this earth and this soil we live on, of which He said, work it and keep it. So without work, without labor, without plowing and sowing, there is no bread for a man, and no portion.

So get ready, Tornik. The season of the autumn gutan must not slip by. Tomorrow morning we go out to the field and start our work. Now take off those bridegroom's broadcloth clothes and put on your working trousers of shal. And let Shushan take off her wedding ornaments too, take the broom in her hand at Mamik's bidding, and set the house in order, sweep it, clean it, and put everything in its place. So, Tornik in the field and Shushan in the house. If they work, God gives bread.

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1. *Psak* is the crown of the Armenian marriage rite, and the crowning is the wedding itself. Bridegroom and bride are crowned king and queen.
 2. Genesis 1:28.
 3. Psalm 128:3.
 4. *Harisa* is the festival dish of hulled wheat and meat, boiled long and beaten smooth.
 5. *Alafranga* means "in the Frankish (European) manner." Papik's joke is that village boys and girls see one another freely before marriage, ahead of the town's new fashions.
 6. The *naghara* is the double-headed drum and the *zurna* the shrill pipe, the inseparable pair of village festivity.
 7. *Litra* is an old measure of weight and capacity in the Van country.
 8. The *kochnak* is the wooden sounding-board struck in place of a bell to call people to worship.
 9. From the crowning office of the Armenian marriage rite, recalling Genesis 2:22.
 10. Genesis 2:23.
 11. Matthew 19:6.
 12. Khrimian (Hayrik) married in his youth, before his ordination. His wife and child died young. Khachik agha Khrimian was the uncle who reared and schooled him. The "Discourse of the Cross" (*Khachi char*) is Khrimian's published sermon-book on the Cross.
 13. *Tagvor* means "king," the bridegroom's title throughout the Armenian wedding, as the bride is queen. Hence the crowning, the *psak*.

CHAPTER XXII

Papik's Crowning in the Field

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Dear Tornik, I am going to crown you again, a second time. Do not imagine that the crowning of the church and the priest is all you need. In the spirit, and by God's law, it is enough and more than enough, yes. But if Papik does not lay his own crown on top of that one, you will die hungry. Look, the day has broken. Give the order to the laborers. Have them harness the *gutan*, our great ox-plow, and take it out to the stubble-field just outside the village. We have to plow that field now, and dung it, and in the spring make a vegetable garden of it.

Yoke the *gutan*. And now watch, Tornik, and see how I am going to crown you. First go and kiss the foreheads of the buffaloes and the oxen. Then come over here to the *gutan*'s plow-handle, bow down to the ground, and kiss the mother soil. My hand is on the handle. Kiss Papik's hand, and then the handle. Here is Papik, forty years a plowman, handing over to you today the highest office there is, the plowman's office, which the Lord God gave to Adam, our great Papik, when He told him to work the earth and keep it.¹

Let me plait you a fine, handsome, round crown of wheat stalks with my own hands. Bring your head here, Tornik, and let me set this crown of mine on it. This crown is your crown from Papik, and his memorial, and you must never lift it from your head until the day you die. And when you have grown old like Papik, set that crown on the head of your eldest son, and let it go on that way from son to son. Now let me tell you what the crown means, so that you understand it properly and keep the memory of this day unspoiled in your mind.

Listen, my honest Tornik. Here is what my crown means. The priest crowned you with Shushan, and you are hers until death. You cannot leave her. In just the same way Papik, by crowning you, binds you to the mother soil, to the gutan and to the tillage of the field, and you must never give it up as long as you live, because it is our own possession, from our fathers and our Papiks. Adam said it, and men still say it. A wife is a man's life. And is the soil not a man's life too? People live on this earth by bread. Shushan will bear you children, and the soil will give you bread. The cow and the sheep grazing out in the field will give you milk, plenty of it, and from the milk you will make butter and cheese. And don't all these good things come to you from the soil?

Now, Tornik, tell the laborers to take up the gutan and the animals, and let us go back to the house. I have to explain the meaning of the field crowning to your mayrik and to Shushan.

Listen while I talk to you, good mistress of the house, and you too, Shushan. Today I took Tornik, the new bridegroom, out to the field. I had the gutan yoked, I put the plow-handle into Tornik's hand, I laid my hand on his head and read the patriarchal blessing over him, and I crowned him a second time, with the tillage of the soil, and bound him to the soil and to the gutan. And I want you both to know that Papik's crowning cannot be undone. Tornik has two wives now. Be clear about that. One wife is Shushan, whom he was crowned with in holy marriage. The other wife is the soil he has inherited from his fathers, and I bound him to her with the blessing of Father Abraham. Shushan will bear Tornik children, and the soil will give bread to the whole family. I pray God keeps Shushan and gives her long life. But Shushan is mortal, and if she dies, Tornik will find another lily. But if the soil dies, then the whole family of Papik's house dies with it. And how can the soil die, when it has stood there from Adam to this day and stands there still, deathless? Let me tell you how the soil dies. It dies on that unlucky day when Tornik takes his hand off the plow-handle and gives up farming. Or

when he grows rich, and grows proud with it, and comes to think it beneath him to live in the village and keep the company of village people, and so leaves the village and the soil behind and goes off to be a townsman. Or else the bad days come down on him, and, trusting that he has land enough and to spare, he piles debt on debt, and the creditor seizes the fields. And oh, Tornik is left without a care in the world.

That is the day the soil dies for Tornik and stays alive for the man who took it. On that day, yes, the lamp of Papik's house goes out, and Tornik the householder becomes a hired laborer. What a loss that will be. Papik's bride, our graceful Shushan, will go out to be a baker-woman in the village, and in the evening she will lay a few loaves in her apron and carry them home to her little ones. Mother of Tornik, good mistress of this house, die soon after Papik, so that you never see that day.

Won't you say it, Tornik? Ah, Papik, what evil fortune-telling is this over your Tornik? Speak good things with your mouth. No, Tornik. God forbid the prophecy should ever come true for you. I pray you never see that black day, and that is exactly why I have painted the sorrowful picture of that black day's life in front of your eyes. It is so that you will see it, and remember your Papik's far-sighted prophecy, and work with all your strength never to let the soil out of your hands. You need the soil not only because it gives you bread and you live on this earth by it, and may God give you long years of sun for it. You need it because when you die you will need two cubits of earth for your grave. Don't you know that men fight even over the earth of a grave? God help the man who dies with no place to be buried, because even the earth of a grave is a man's own right. What I mean, Tornik, is that a man lives by the soil from the day he is born, and when he dies he needs the soil once more, to be buried under it.

So the soil is what you need on the day of life and on the day of death, Tornik. That is why Papik has bound you to the soil and crowned you with it, so that you hold it fast, and let no one else snatch it out of

your hands, and are not left landless, turned into a slave, driven to other men's doors to work for hire. Because then Papik's uncanny prophecy will come true for you, and you will come to your senses and remember. How sad, I was a householder once, and I paid no attention to my patriarch Papik's advice. Now, like the prodigal son,² I work for wages. I have left my own flock of sheep, I graze other men's herds, and once a week at least I go around the doors and collect the herdsman's bread.

Yes, Tornik. When the wheel of a village householder's fortune turns, and he sinks so low that he becomes the herdsman of that same village, do not think that lot is the bitterest thing there is. The village herdsman is a laborer on a wage. He carries bread home by the backload, he has a milking cow, a few sheep at least, and a goat, and his family lives in plenty.

But when even the herdsman's place does not fall to that ruined householder, then he thinks back over what he used to be, and says to himself, I was a householder. How can I work as a hired hand in the village? Better to leave the village and go to the cities, and there, as an unknown pauper, mix in with the beggars of the street and be a beggar myself. And if, as a man fallen from wealth, a devletten dushkun, fortune's castaway, I can manage to get a certificate from the Prelate of the diocese, that will be a great stroke of luck for me. I will go from country to country and apply to the churches and the rich men, and when I have made my collection I will come back, pay my debt, and keep my family.

There, Tornik, the harshest and bitterest lot of all is this one, when a householder turns to begging and believes that by that base, dishonorable begging he can scrape together enough money to set his ruined house on its feet again. Do you believe a farmer's ruined house can be raised up by begging? In my whole long life I never saw it happen. The firm foundation of a village householder's house is the working of the soil. Once the householder gives up the soil and the soil's



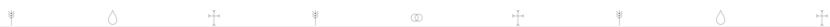
earnings, he is ruined already, and he will never stand up again. He will live in destitution until he dies.

Well, dear Tornik, that is enough. Let us finish the field crowning and my field lessons. But I still have to tell the village priest and the villagers about it. Let the world know what a strange thing the Papik of Archak has done. He took his Tornik, the new bridegroom, out to the field, and crowned him on the soil and on the gutan. Nobody knows what sort of crowning that is, performed out in the open field with no priest, no cross and no Gospel, and no people to witness it.

Let our villagers judge it however they like, Tornik. It is enough that you have understood the meaning of this crown. I will die and you will stay alive, and you will see. In time the villager will understand it too, and he will say a God-have-mercy for Papik's soul.

1. Genesis 2:15.

2. Luke 15:11-19.



CHAPTER XXIII

The Field of the Dead and the Memorials of the Graves

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Let's leave our living field for a while, Tornik, and go visit the field of the dead. You know that death is edging closer to Papik, little by little, and while I am still alive I want to walk through the sleeping-place of the dead one last time on my own feet, before the day comes when they lay me on the bier and carry me there chanting the psalm for the dead, and set me in my grave, and I rest with our fathers.

The graves are a talking schoolroom for us too. The *khachkars*¹ and the memorials of the dead are still speaking to us. Let's see what kind of people, in the old days and in ours, were born and came into the world, lived and worked, for good or for ill, and then left this world, the sun, life, house and family, and disappeared into this dark world of the dead. Over every Christian's grave a cross-stone is planted, with the dead man's name and life written on it, so that whoever sees it can read it and say a God-have-mercy.

So let's read these memorials, Tornik, the old ones and the new ones, and see what rich householders and other hardworking, remarkable men have come out of the ranks of the village people, men whose lives are lessons in goodness for us. Did you know there are dead who keep talking to us until the end of the world? They talk through books. They talk through memorials that never die. They talk through the stones of the grave.

Look, Tornik. Read this epitaph.

"This is the tomb of Ohanjan the householder, of Archak, who lived eighty years. He never went far from the village or from his house, and he never let go of the *gutan*'s plow-handle until the day he died. He rebuilt our village church when it had fallen in, and left a field to the church for his memorial."

"Say God have mercy on his soul."

Read the cross-stone next to his.

"I am Markhas of the Mirzo house. I started out poor, a hired laborer without a span of soil to my name. I worked, and God gave me success, and with my honest earnings I bought plenty of land, grew rich, and became a householder. In my will I told the children who come after me that every year, on the days of the dead of the five tabernacle-feasts,² they should make *matagh* and hand out food to the poor. Say God have mercy on Markhas's soul."

Come, Tornik, read the letters on that big *khachkar*.

"Here rests the great householder Adam, who owned much land. He yoked the *gutan* with three relays of animals and kept forty laborers. His was the great patriarchal house of our village, and the number of his family reached seventy. When he gave a soul-meal or made a *matagh*, he fed men by the thousand and the thousand. He was a deeply virtuous man. He died at a hundred, and the whole village wept for him. In his will he ordered that four fields out of his holdings go to the monasteries of Varag and of Archak, and that the village church receive oil from his oil-press for its lamps, without a break. As you pass by, say God have mercy on the soul of the great householder Adam."

Don't walk past yet. Read the letters on that little cross-stone close by.



"I am Margo the naghara-drummer. I lie at rest under this cross-stone. I spent my whole life in good cheer, in winter at weddings, and in summer setting out my melon patch. Every spring I came to the village of Archak and set out my melon ground, and I raised melons and watermelons in plenty and traded them for wheat, for barley, for butter, cheese and *zhazhik*, and filled my house with abundance. I worked, and I lived a very happy life. When I saw that I was going to die, I asked in my will not to be buried in the city but to be carried to Archak village and buried there. God keep that village standing, since it kept my house standing. Say God have mercy on the soul of Margo the naghara-drummer."

Read the next headstone beside it, Tornik, the one with a hen carved on it.

"I am Markos the fowl-keeper. I was a villager, but I had no land, and I racked my brains for a way to make a living. Then one night I dreamed of a great many hens and a great many eggs, and I said to myself, this is my fortune. In the morning I got up and went to work interpreting my dream. First I built a little hen-house, put ten hens in it and set them to brood, and within a few years I had three hundred hens. I was always selling fowls and eggs to the village's guests and to the townspeople, and my family and I lived well on chicken and eggs. Foxes and martens are great enemies of hens, so I built traps for them, and every winter I caught enough foxes and martens to make a good profit on the skins. Thanks to the poultry I learned hunting too. At the end, when I was dying, I told my children in my will never to let the hen-house and the hens out of their hands, because that is their only bread and living.

"Say God have mercy on the soul of Markos the fowl-keeper."

A little further off there is a gravestone with its letters grown over with moss, Tornik, and a beehive carved on it. Read it, and let's see who it is.



"I am Peto, the laboring bee-keeper. Apart from my little hut I had nothing at all. I thought and thought, and then I went and borrowed money and bought five hives, and built a small bee-house and put them in it. God made it prosper. My bees multiplied until there were a hundred hives, and they gave honey and wax in great plenty. I carried it to the city and sold it for money, and in the village I traded it for bread and butter, and I kept my family on honey and butter. On the day I died I told my eldest son never to leave the door of the bee-house, and to look after the bees with great care, because they are our hardworking laborers who take no wage. I also asked in my will that every Sunday, and on the days of the Liturgy, a candle be lit on the altar of the village church, and that the priest remember me in his prayers.

"Say God have mercy on the soul of Peto the bee-keeper."

Next to him there is an unhewn khachkar. Read it, and let's see whose grave it is.

"I am Nazar the herdsman. Thirty years I kept the herd. Long life to the village of Archak. My herd was two thousand head of cattle. Every week's end I gathered the herdsman's bread, back-load after back-load, and the larder of my house was full of loaves. Our mistress of the house never learned to knead dough or bake bread. Our villagers think herding is nothing at all. It is not. Herding is village work like any other. I have no complaint to make. To the day I died I never went hungry for bread.

"Say God have mercy on the soul of Nazar the herdsman."

Tornik, you have heard how the villagers are forever complaining that the village *gzirs* are foul-mouthed men, full of curses. But I have heard that our village once had a good *gzir*, a very kind and sensible man. He never wronged anyone, he kept the rota for quartering guests fair, and he always tried to spare the poor. To this day the villagers

remember that good gzir's name. And here is his grave. What a surprise, Tornik. Even the gzir of Archak has a khachkar over him and a memorial. Read it.

"I am Kazo, the gzir of the thriving village of Archak. Ah, how comfortably I lie here under the soil. My ears are at peace now from the villagers' abuse and their pointless, unjust curses. And the things I put up with from those harsh, impatient, demanding guests. I was beaten, I was tormented, I was carded like a wad of cotton. That is why they named me gzir, because they thought I was the one doing the carding.³ God took my soul. I died and got free of it all. I lived poor and I died poor, and I have nothing to leave anyone. All I have for you is this advice, poor men of the village. Do not become a village gzir. Go and work the soil instead. A laborer of the soil is a thousand times better off than a village gzir, because the gzir's trade is a wicked kind of farming.

"Say God have mercy on the soul of Kazo the gzir."

But enough of these little men and their little cross-stones, though even the ones counted little have their meaning, each in his own measure. Let's walk on, Tornik, and find the great khachkars, and the souls under them who were the glory and the honor of our village. The people do not forget. They remember their good works, and they keep their memory.

A good way from the village you can see a hillock. Do you see it, Tornik? On its crown stands a great khachkar, and that is the grave of Hako the shepherd, the master of great flocks. A spring rises out of that same hillock, and Hako's milking ewes used to be brought to that spring for their midday milking.

Hako the shepherd was not a landholding householder in our village, but as a shepherd, a master of flocks, he counted as a great householder, because he had four *ktir* of sheep, a *ktir* being a flock, and every *ktir* a

thousand head. They said he kept forty hired shepherds and lamb-herds and had married off every one of them. How many daughters he had I do not know, but his house was full of his grandchildren. He was a deeply compassionate, open-handed man, and his blessed house was a refuge for the poor. At shearing time he handed out wool to the poor, and Hako the shepherd could say, as Job did, the bare backs of the poor were warmed with my wool.⁴ In the same way he set aside a share of milk from his milk, of cheese from his cheese, of butter from his butter, for the village families in need. And Hako handed it out to everyone alike. He made no difference for the needy of the other races settled around him. Whoever came to him, whoever asked him, he gave, and he did not sort people into kinds. That is why his name and his fame stood so high even with the neighboring Kurdish chieftains of good family. Once, hostile Kurds from the Persian side raided and drove off half of Hako's sheep. Our Hako, like the patriarch Abraham, took his brave lads and the strong men of the village, went after them, fought them, and brought back what they had taken.⁵

The shepherd's plain life gave our patriarch Hako a very long one. He lived to a hundred and twenty, and in all that time he was never sick until the very end. He knew in himself that he was going to die. He called his children, his grandchildren and the whole household to gather around his bed, and blessed them all with a patriarch's mouth. He kissed his shepherd's staff and his horn-pipe, which he had laid beside him, and with a trembling hand he took them and gave them to Aprsam, his eldest son. "I hand over to you, my son," he said, "my rights as shepherd and as householder. Govern as I governed. Keep our house and the flocks of sheep. Do not forget pity and compassion. Always set aside a share of what the sheep yield for the poor and destitute of the village who are in need. And I lay this on you as a testament that must never be broken, my son. On the days of the dead of the year's five tabernacle-feasts you must make a matagh of twenty sheep and give the poor bread and food until they have had enough, and in his Liturgy the

village priest must remember the soul of Hako the shepherd along with the souls of all the dead. My son Aprsam, I bless you, and I charge you. Love your brothers, love the family, love the flocks of sheep, because they are the treasure of our wealth. Work so that the great patriarchal name of shepherd is never taken away from the house of Hako the shepherd. I cannot talk any longer. The angel has come. I have to give up my soul." He said it, and gave up his soul. The whole village wept and mourned for him, and, as he had wanted, they carried his body out and buried it in the bosom of this hillock.

They say that on the day of Hako's burial the whole village poured out onto this hillock, and the shepherds brought Hako's two thousand milking ewes to the *peratekh*, the midday milking-ground. Aprsam, the eldest son, gives the order that the whole of that day's milk from the sheep be given to the people and to the poor. Vanetsis bring wine and hand it out to the poor over a grave, but over Hako's grave it was milk instead of wine. The whole village drank new-milked, foaming milk out of wooden *kot* bowls, and the poor filled their vessels too, and said their God-have-mercy and blessed the dead man's grave. And do you know what the shepherds did, Tornik? They say each shepherd brought a great vessel of milk and poured it out over Hako's grave. What a sweet thing that is, and how full of meaning. Hako the shepherd, the great householder, fed on milk, and when he died, his grave sucked milk too.

Aprsam his son set a great khachkar over his father's grave, with his good memorial written on it. Read it, Tornik.

"This is the tomb of the great householder Hako the shepherd, who was buried on this hillock, as he had wished. Blessed be his memory.

"Say God have mercy on the soul of the great householder Hako the shepherd."

Now let's turn back, Tornik, and go to our ruined monastery of the Holy Mother of God, where only the church is left standing. Under the church's outer wall, where a spring comes up from beneath the foundation, a thick-trunked willow grows near the spring, and tradition says there is a grave there, with no memorial and no khachkar, and that it is Ashugh Musho's.⁶ In this world the *ashughs* are counted as nobodies, poor men. Who is going to look after their souls, or honor their memory, or set a cross-stone over their grave? But Ashugh Musho is a lucky man, because his gravestone is the little church of the Holy Mother of God itself, and Musho's honest soul rests in its shadow.

Let me tell you Musho's life and his death, Tornik, the way I heard it from the old men of our village. Listen closely, because it is a strange and curious story.

Ashugh Musho was born a son of this village of ours, and he was apprenticed to Ashugh Chichak, whose grave they still point out on the slope above the church of Surb Toros in the village of Kharakonis.⁷

You should know, Tornik, that ashughs are men who love a free life, and they are not house-builders. For all their many love songs, they are not much for marrying themselves. There are also ashughs whose songs lean toward moral counsel, and who make beautiful poems in praise of the saints. Our Ashugh Musho was that kind. Jesus told his apostles to take no staff and no bag on the road,⁸ and the ashughs keep that instruction to the letter, houseless, propertyless, wandering men. All they have is a *saz*. They sling it over the shoulder and go from village to village. Wherever there is a wedding or a soul-meal, they walk in freely, without an invitation, and they know how to strike up songs and tunes to fit the occasion, cheerful or mournful. Winter is their best season. When the villagers stop their work in the fields, they crowd into the warm stables, and the moment they hear that an ashugh has come to the village, they come in from everywhere and gather round. The song-making ashugh starts his song and his story. You should see,

Tornik, how our unlettered, simple people listen to him, spellbound. For them the ashugh stands far above the church clerk, and a story is sweeter than a *vardapet's* sermon.

They tell a funny story about our Musho. He heard there was a wedding in a nearby village and set off for it at night. It was winter, the snow was coming down hard, and on the road a pack of hungry wolves closed in on him. Musho was quick, and he knew how to fool wolves. In a moment he unwound his sash and let one end of it trail on the ground, and while the wolves played with the trailing end he struck up his keman on the other side. Apparently Musho knew from experience that wild animals have an ear and a taste for the fine art of music too. So, with his heart in his mouth, Ashugh Musho reached a big tree that stood a little way outside the village, scrambled up it in no time, and went on playing the tune the wolves liked, and they arranged themselves in a ring around the tree, and sat, and listened. The wedding party in the village heard the sound of the keman and knew Musho was coming, and out they came to meet him, and the poor wolves' concert was ruined. Musho got away, went into the wedding house, and struck up the same sweet tune there. Ashugh Musho coaxed the wolves and taught them not to eat men. Their share of the food is the sheep and nothing else. It seems to me Musho's idea was that, having schooled the wolves, he would have liked to school the roughness out of the villagers too, so that they would stop eating each other's flesh, not just because they are brothers of one blood, but even more because of the commandment of Jesus, who teaches, "You are all brothers."⁹

Musho was the village people's ashugh and no one else's. He never liked going to the city. What he loved were villages, fields, mountains, flowers, the babbling water of springs. In a word, he was deeply in love with the picture of nature that the Creator's hand had painted. That is why he would sometimes disappear from the village. His dearest companion was his saz. He would sling it over his shoulder and wander

off through the fields and the mountain country, and everywhere he went he found bread enough to fill his stomach.

Our village's Ashugh Musho had a very great name. Besides his saz and his keman he had a voice that was very sweet and moving, and by nature he was a cheerful, good-humored man. And more than that, he had a burning faith in the Saints. Every year he went on pilgrimage to Surb Karapet of Mush.¹⁰ He would lay his saz on the grave and pray, "Surb Karapet, granter of wishes, you who stood godfather to Christ, give your servant Musho the gift of song." The ashughs believe that the silent hermit of that wilderness is their pir, their patron. And the strange thing is that the rope-dancer, with the same faith, asks the same grace for his own nimble art.

On his way back from Surb Karapet, Musho had made a habit of coming to Ashtishat, going into the chapel of Surb Sahak, laying his head on the grave and weeping his fill.¹¹ How, I do not know. The man had no letters and no history. Where had he learned the greatness and the meaning of Sahak Partev? It seems these song-making ashughs know who the singers of our church's sharakans were.

From Ashtishat he would go on to the monastery of the Apostles, and when he had made his pilgrimage he would walk around to the east side of the church, where the Holy Translators lie buried.¹² He would kiss their graves, and then, tired, sit down there for a while, take up the saz, and go on with the laments of the old man of Khoren.¹³ He did his own singing and his own weeping. The only echo his lament ever had was his own feeling heart.

When Musho had comforted himself with weeping, he would come down from Tsovasar to a place at the mouth of a gorge, where a mill had stood from the old days, and the miller was a friend of Musho's, because ashughs travel so much that they have acquaintances everywhere. Musho said good day and then asked, Brother Mkho, have you got a

millers' loaf? I am very hungry. Oh, what a thing to ask me, friend Musho. Can't you see? The water came and carried the mill away, and it took the flour and the *tonir* along with it. Where am I supposed to find you a millers' loaf? Musho saw that the miller was hunting for something in the wreck of the mill, and asked him, what are you looking for in this flooded-out mill? I am looking for the mill's *jakhjakh*, the miller answers, the *jakhjakh*!¹⁴

Musho takes the saz down from his shoulder at once, sits down on a broken bank, and starts up his mourning song.

Eh, miller, miller,
 come and sit down, let me play you the saz.
 Take comfort, friend.
 The water came and carried the mill away,
 and here you are, groping about,
 hunting for your little *jakhjakh*.
 What good is a useless clapper to you,
 when the mill's post and bridge-beam,
 the standing stones, the rynd and the paddles,
 the wheat-grist and all the rest,
 have been rolled away by the flood?
 When the face of the sky growls
 with black, black storm-clouds,
 and when the doors of spring swing open
 and the warm sweet winds begin to breathe,
 the rain comes down from above by the jugful,
 the snowdrifts melt away below,
 and then watch the great flood
 come hissing like a dragon,
 braiding its water with a furious rush,
 rolling the buffalo-boulders over and over.
 Whatever stands in its way it wrecks and rolls off.
 It lays village and town in ruins.

Where will your poor mill be then,
to stand up against the flood?
Take the lesson and the warning, miller.
Leave that ruined mill where it lies,
and after this do not build your mill
at the mouth of the gorge again.

You sing well and you talk well, friend Musho, but you are no miller, to know a mill's business. Do you think millers are ignorant men who cannot read or write? I studied at the school of the monastery of Surb Karapet once, but fortune made a miller of me. Well, what of it? I have read somewhere that Movses of Khoren, coming home from Athens, ended up a miller himself, when he went about our country as a stranger with his hard-won philosophy in his bag and nobody would buy his wares.¹⁵ Who knows? Maybe this very flooded-out mill is where he did his milling.

Now listen, Musho, while I tell you the great meaning of this jakhjakh I am hunting for. Blessed be that scrap of wood, the jakhjakh, because it saved me. Otherwise I would have gone down the flood along with the mill. You know the jakhjakh is the mill's rooster. But ours is a strange rooster. While he crows and chatters away, I sleep sweetly and without a care, and the moment his voice stops I wake on the instant, and I see that the mill has come to a stop. Ah, but this time it was the flood. It broke up the mill's water-house, the jakhjakh's voice stopped, I got out of the mill, and God saved me.

That rooster of your mill, that jakhjakh, is a truly wonderful thing, said Musho. The world wakes up when a voice is raised, but millers only wake up when the jakhjakh's voice is cut off. I admit it, the meaning of that jakhjakh is very great. That jakhjakh is worth a lot. Hunt for it until you find it.

Musho, my dear, have you read the book of Scripture? In the old nation of Israel there were jakhjakh prophets who gave voice, and the mill of Jacob's house kept turning. And when those God-speaking jakhjakhs had their voices cut off, the water carried away the mill of Jacob's house, and it lies in ruins to this day. We had our vardapet jakhjakhs once too, and when their voice fell silent, we knew that the water had come and carried our mill away as well. Eh, friend Musho, do you understand the meaning of the jakhjakh now? I beg you, make a song about this jakhjakh, and go around singing it always. Because aren't the ashugh's song and his saz our jakhjakhs?

But enough of the jakhjakh. You have given me one more piece of advice, Musho, to abandon the ruined mill at the gorge-mouth and build my mill somewhere else. But where am I supposed to build it, friend Musho? Don't you know that every place has an owner? This mill came down to me as an inheritance from my father and my father's fathers. I will not let it lie there a ruin and let my great forefathers' memorial die with it. I will have to borrow again, find the means somehow, and build my mill, which is my family's only hope and support. I have no field, I have no plow-animal. I live by the mill and nothing else.

Then, said Musho, when God gives you success and you build your mill, here is my advice for you now. On the side of the gorge-mouth where the torrent runs, put up a thick, strong wall of stone and lime, and then your mill will be safe.

Oh, friend Musho, you do not know a miller's situation. You break your bread in pieces too big. Where would I find that kind of money? My old forefathers never thought of doing it, so am I supposed to think of it? I have to build my mill the way I found it. What you are talking about is no business for a hungry, poor man. Do you know, Musho, this is the fourth time this mill has gone down the flood. Who knows? Maybe God will take pity on a poor wretch and keep my mill safe from the torrents this once.

When Musho heard that, he was quiet and thought for a while, and then he said, you are quite right, friend. The business of this world of ours has to be run with good sense. It is best that every man works to his own measure, the miller to his measure, and Musho with his saz.

Well, miller, goodbye. I am off. You build your mill. The mill's jakhjakh has a great meaning, and I understand it now. Musho with his saz is a mill's jakhjakh too.

Musho came back from Mush to the village of Archak very heavy-hearted. It was a Sunday. He went to the church, went into the sacristy, called the priest, made his confession, and received holy Communion that same day. Toward evening he took incense and a candle and went to the monastery of the Holy Mother of God. He went into the church, burned his incense and lit his candle, knelt before the altar, murmured one long prayer, and then kissed the cross and the Gospel. He came out of the church and came here, under this tree, at the head of the spring. He had a little unleavened cake with him, and some roasted meal. That, you understand, was his last supper, and he ate it with great appetite, and instead of wine he drank the cold water of the spring. Then he took the saz in his hands and began to sing, and this song of his was piercing and full of grief. At other times Musho sang cheerfully and merrily, but this last time, you would have said he was setting the dirge of his own death to music, like a swan, and the tears fell from his clouded eyes onto the trembling strings of his chongur. I think Musho was singing the Lament of Khorenatsi, which he knew by heart, because the flooded-out mill and the jakhjakh had gone deep into this son of his. Musho finished the order of his own death and his "reckoning," laid the saz at his head, lay down under the cool tree, and fell asleep so sweetly that he never got up again. The angel was waiting, and Musho gave up his soul.

That same evening a devout old woman, who used to bring oil and incense to the church of the Holy Mother of God, saw Musho lying

under the tree. She said to herself, let me go and give him a call, he must not spend the night out here. She called, Musho! Musho! Musho gave no answer. She went closer and shook him with her hand, and found that Musho had gone stiff as wood. God help us, she said, Musho is dead. The old woman went to the village and told the priest, and in no time the news of Musho's death was through the whole village. Priest, sexton and all the people poured out to the monastery of the Holy Mother of God. The priest made the announcement and declared Musho's will. He said, Musho, may his soul be in light, had known in himself that he was going to die. He came to church this morning, confessed, and received the Sacrament. And now let me tell you Musho's will. He begged me, and put me under oath, and said, "Der Hayr, I am a houseless, homeless wandering man. I beg you, bury me wherever I happen to die. And do not forget, bury my beloved saz with me." And I hope and believe that when Gabriel blows his trumpet on the day of judgment,¹⁶ Musho will go up to the kingdom with his saz and glorify God along with the angels. In that free world, for free souls, won't singing ashughs be needed too?

The people heard the announcement and gladly agreed to Musho's will, and they dug a grave under the church wall then and there and buried Musho in it. And the people said God have mercy on Musho's soul, and went back to the village.

That is how the people's beloved Ashugh Musho died, Tornik. Let's say the same God-have-mercy for him, and turn back. Near the church of our village there is another grave, where *Mahtesi*¹⁷ Agrippas has lain at rest for nearly thirty years now, Hayrik's close and devoted friend.

Look, Tornik. An unhewn stone has been thrown over the grave, with no letters and no memorial. Now let me tell you who Agrippas Tpozian was. He was a Vanetsi born, and a neighbor of Hayrik's house.

I have known that good departed man since the days when Hayrik first went to Bolis as a pandukht, when he was not yet a vardapet but was still Mkrtich the schoolmaster. As a fellow countryman and a close friend, that kind-hearted, cheerful man was always Hayrik's host, and whenever Hayrik was in trouble he came to him and made things easier. Along with him I must not forget Mister Grigor Jrbashkhian, a man who loved books and reading. Without any schooling or grammar he understood the language without a mistake, and by sheer reading he had become expert in the correct forms of literary words. When the Hravirak Araratian was first being printed, he often pointed out the errors to Hayrik.¹⁸ He is still alive, and lives now like a vardapet without a cowl at the monastery of Varag, busy with the same love of reading. He too had known Hayrik from boyhood and was a close friend, and always took him in at his lodging in exile.

And when Hayrik came back to Van with a printing press, settled at the monastery of Varag and started his undertakings, that same M. Agrippas was his devoted helper and right hand. He was not the kind of man to give encouragement in words alone. When he saw the straits the monastery of Varag was in, he lent the money it needed without interest, and sometimes he even stood surety for its notes of debt, and trusted it completely.

He was a benefactor of our village too, Tornik. Although he was a tanner by trade, he loved village life and the work of the fields, so he kept up his dealings with our villagers and was always coming and going. He was the first cause of the founding of our village school. He took on the rebuilding of the broken dam of the lake of Archak, within the bounds of the village of Ermants, and its water comes down in abundance over the fields of our plain and multiplies the yield of the sowings.

About thirty years ago, one day in the first watch of the evening, ill-omened brigands dragged him into a little ravine on the plain of

Aghtagh, or Artagh, and beat that innocent man, Mahtesi Agrippas, cruelly to death. Hayrik was away at the monastery of Surb Karapet of Mush at the time. Manuel the schoolmaster, a teacher at the school of Varag, wrote a lamentation on the death of that matchless friend, and the singing children of Van sing it to this day to a most piercing tune. And Hayrik too wrote a lamentation long ago for his close friend, and I know that heart-piercing elegy by heart. I will say it for you.

Morning had passed, and midday,
and evening was near its close.
How was I to know that day
was my last day?
The old women's wizard raven
called from the roof, caw, caw.
I understood his language.
He was saying, stay, stay, do not go.
I said, I do not believe
that lying, evil prophet
who cheated our patriarch Noah.
He went, and never came back.¹⁹
I mounted my horse at the house.
The horse gave me such a piteous look.
I said, walk on, walk on, my white one.
It is a man's fate.
I came into the plain of Artash,
and off the plain, oh, I caught the smell of blood.
I sneezed, and my head shook.
Horror came over me.
Fear and trembling took hold of me.
Our sun gathered in its light
and went into its sweet sleep.
Mountain and glen went dark around me.
The dusk of night closed over me.
The moon was only just new.

She had put on her gold-strung necklace,
and from her little horns there hung
glittering stars in their thousands.
I said, by this stub-horned little moon
I will keep to my straight road.
Oh, but that too was hidden from my eyes
by a dragon-headed black cloud.
Phantoms came up behind me,
evil-boding enemy spirits.
They struck from behind with all their force,
and my head and my brain burst open.
I toppled from the horse to the ground,
breathless, half dead.
They took me by the feet and dragged me,
and threw me into a little ravine,
and gave me many more wounds,
and left me as still as a log.
They said, he is dead, he is dead.
They left me like that and went away.
Only deep inside my heart
my soul was still fluttering.
I was the traveler to Jericho,
fallen into the robbers' hands.
Oh, there was no kind man for me,
no merciful Samaritan.²⁰
Move on, black cloud, move on.
Uncover the moon's eye.
Let her see, and be a witness
to my innocent blood.
I know, moon,
from your vault of the sky
you have no wish to look at
the brutal crimes of men.

No, you are not willing,
out of the blue heaven,
to come and spread your light
over this black field.
Move on and go, then, moon.
My eyes are going dark.
Oh, I have no more need
of moon or of sun.
A little longer and I die.
The bright sun of my life is going dark.
Wind, you that blow
from the mountain of Varag,
carry the bad news to Taron.
Bring me word from the Eagle.²¹
Come quickly, Eagle, my love.
My soul is still struggling.
Let me say my last goodbye to you,
and then give up my soul.
The Eagle's spirit flew,
and came down to the field of death,
and saw the man he loved
fallen there, dying,
rolled on the ground,
swimming in his blood.
The season was spring.
The flowers had opened,
oh, and they were dyed
with the innocent victim's blood.
The blood was still warm.
The earth drank it, and it foamed.
The bubbles of the blood
called out to the Eagle.
Soul spoke with soul,

and no tongue was used.
Come, Hayrik, and see
the death of the man you loved.
A pitiless hand
has poured out my blood.
Lift me from here. Do not leave
my helpless body behind.
Do not carry me to the city.
Take me to Archak village.
Have my grave dug
close to the church.
Do not take off my body
my bloodstained shirt.
Bury me, Hayrik,
in a red winding-sheet.
When the Lord the Judge comes
and sits in judgment,
I will bring my complaint
before His great court,
and let my bloodied shroud
stand as my witness.
Do not wash my body.
Do not wipe my bleeding wounds.
Lay me down unwashed, just as I am,
in the hollow of the grave.
Seal my tomb, Hayrik,
with the cross of your hand,
so that I lie still
until the last day.
Set a cross over me,
and write my memorial.
Here lies at rest
Agrippas, the martyr.

Goodbye, Hayrik.
 If you go to Varag,
 remember me, do not forget me,
 when you offer the Liturgy.
 He said it, and his soul took wing,
 and went to GOD.

Let's remember him too, Tornik, the departed man of the shining soul, and say God have mercy on his soul. And now it is enough. Let's end the memorials of the dead in their graves here. Even now I can feel it, Tornik. My death is close, and my own memorial will be mixed in with these.

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1. *Khachkar*, the carved memorial cross-stone.
 2. The five tagavar (tabernacle) feasts of the Armenian Church. The day after each is a merelots, a day of remembrance of the dead.
 3. The epitaph's pun. Gzir, the village crier-beadle, against gzel, "to card wool," as though the gzir's office were to card, or claw, his neighbors.
 4. Job 31:20.
 5. Cf. Genesis 14:14-16, Abraham's pursuit and recovery of the plunder.
 6. *Ashugh*, the folk minstrel of village and road.
 7. Kharakonis, a village of the Van plain, southeast of the city.
 8. Matthew 10:9-10.
 9. Matthew 23:8.
 10. Surb Karapet, the great pilgrimage monastery of St. John the Forerunner near Mush. Folk faith made the Forerunner the wish-granting patron (pir) of minstrels, players and rope-dancers.
 11. Ashtishat, the ancient holy place of Taron on the Aratsani. The chapel holds the grave of St. Sahak Partev (d. 439), the catholicos under whom the Scriptures were put into Armenian.
 12. The monastery of the Holy Apostles (Arakelots) near Mush, where the graves of the Holy Translators, the disciples of Sahak and Mesrop, are venerated.

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13. The Lament (Voghby) that closes the History of Armenia of Movses Khorenatsi, "the old man of Khoren," mourning the ruin of the nation, the church and the schools.
14. *Jakhjakh*, the mill-clapper, the scrap of wood that rattles against the hopper while the stones turn and falls silent the moment the mill stops.
15. The folk legend of Movses Khorenatsi, come home from Athens with his learning and finding no buyer for it. The miller here tells it as book-lore.
16. Cf. Matthew 24:31 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
17. *Mahtesi*, the title of one who has made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem.
18. The Hravirak Araratian ("Summoner of Ararat," 1850), Khrimian's early summons to the homeland, printed in Constantinople before his return to Van with a printing press.
19. Genesis 8:7, the raven sent out from the ark that did not come back.
20. Luke 10:30-34.
21. The Eagle is Khrimian himself, his emblem and epithet, from his journal Artsvi Vaspurakan ("Eagle of Vaspurakan"), printed at Varag.
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CHAPTER XXIV

Papik's Testament and Death

Ի. Պապիկէ կտակ եւ մահ

Dear Tornik, my time has come. The bright morning of my life is over, the noon is over, the last of the day is here and evening is closing in. Now I have to sleep, and rest in a way that means I never get up again. You can see that my strength is gone. My steps shake, and even the staff is no help to me any more. My hands have stopped working. My eyes have grown dim, like the patriarch Isaac's. My whole body has become good for nothing. I am no use now, not to you and not to the world. When a man can no longer work, his going on living is one thing too many. I am a burden to our family and to the villagers alike. To eat bread my own hand has not plowed for, has not sown, has not reaped, how bitter that is, and how contrary to God's commandment that you must eat your bread by the sweat of your face.¹ My body has turned to dry bone. No sweat rises from my forehead any more, because sweat comes from work.

Children and grandchildren do carry a heavy duty. They must tend their aged fathers and grandfathers with real care, without complaining, until the day they die. The presence of the old is a blessing on a house and a family. That is why holy Scripture says, "Let no elder be missing from your house."²

But I have seen it and heard it, Tornik. Often enough, in families where the old fathers, the grandfathers, the old women lie suffering a long time in their beds, those same loving households of theirs begin to grumble. If only he would die and set us free. What is this we are putting up with? They forget. They do not remember their parents' and their grandfathers' love and tenderness, the kindness of a father and a mother whose care raised them and made them grown men.

Let that go, Tornik. You do not yet know the things that go on inside a family. Sometimes the father of a household is very rich, his chests full of gold, but grasping and tight-fisted by nature. He runs the expenses of his house with the harshest stinginess and lives like a beggar. Do you know what such a man's family prays? God, take his soul, and free us from his hard-hearted housekeeping.

Sometimes God hears that prayer and takes the miser's soul. The family weep for a while, until the grand funeral is over. Then, once they have shut the miser's body in the grave, they open the chests of gold. Extravagance, waste and display move into the miser's house and take over. It does not last long. The season of extravagance is short. The chests of gold are soon empty. Extravagance goes out, and poverty comes in to stay for good.

I am glad, Tornik, that you are a good boy. You are not waiting for your Papik to die, and your Papik is no miser. A peasant cannot be a miser as long as his door stands open. You were a little orphan, and I raised you like a rose. I have no chests of gold for you to look at and think, how fine it would be if my Papik died, and the gold were mine, and I could live my life as I pleased.

The inheritance I leave you is not gold. It is worth far more than gold, and it yields more. What is gold, anyway? It never stays in one place. It scatters like quicksilver, it runs off, it disappears. And often enough clever thieves break through and steal the miser's hoarded treasure.³

What I leave you is our fathers' inheritance, the fields and the land, which stay where they are, solid and unchanged. I leave you the *gutan*, our great ox-plow, with its two relays of oxen. I leave you milk cows and sheep by the hundred. These are Papik's red gold pieces. All I ask is that you work to keep your accounts, till the ground, and look after the animals exactly as I taught you in the long, plain, homely lessons I gave

you on the art of working the soil.

Let me talk to you again, Tornik. I can feel it in myself, my death is close. The angel of death has come, and he is knocking at Papik's door. I could throw a thousand bolts and bars behind that door and it would do no good. He would come in through the window, because angels have a piercing power. They pass through bodies as hard as steel. And if I said, I will go and hide in the depths of the ocean, the angel of death would find me there too. He follows a man everywhere.

Tomorrow is Sunday, Tornik. Take my arm and lead me to church. Like Musho, I need to speak, and confess, and pray, and see my last Liturgy, and receive holy Communion. That is my last provision for the road. I believe that with that provision, the Bread of Life that Christ left us, I will be counted worthy of the holy kingdom. When we come back from church, Tornik, have my felt bed spread so I can lie down and rest. My head has grown very heavy. My heart has started to race, and my feet are already cold. I know that cold will climb slowly toward my heart, the center of the body, and in that hour my whole body will go cold, and suddenly you will see that Papik is dead and the lamp of his life has gone out. I am asking God for a few more days of life, just until I finish my testament.

Here is the first part of my family testament, Tornik. Your widowed mayrik, who bore you and who today is the mistress and steward of our house, you must honor with every respect, as the mother who gave you life, just as holy Scripture commands. "Honor your father and your mother, that it may go well with you."⁴ Your father is dead. You have only a mayrik, and you are the one child who is her consolation. You see how she watches over you both. In her old age take every care of her, and be careful never to give her grief in any way at all. She is a hardworking mistress and steward. The whole running of our house is in her hands, and she alone gives the orders.

And you, Shushan. The great duty of a bride is obedience. With your mother-in-law, be a bride who is loving, gentle, obedient and willing. She is a very good woman, and she loves us with a mother's tenderness. You may have heard that there are mothers-in-law who humiliate and torment their brides, though who knows, maybe those brides have plenty of faults of their own. But you have been a bride in this house for years now. Did you ever once hear your mother-in-law say a bitter word to you, or see her treat you with contempt? Remember, Shushan, that one day you will be a mother-in-law yourself. What you give is what you will get. Do not forget Papik's advice.

I entrust to you the dignity and the decency of our patriarchal house. Keep that virtue of our line unspoiled. Read the story of the patriarchs in holy Scripture, always. Their lives and their innocence are written down there.

By the holy crowning the Lord God gave you a flower, Tornik, and her name is Shushan, the lily. And He gave Shushan a Tornik. There is no other for either of you until the day you die. I bless you both. May you live long and live in love. May the tree of your holy marriage bear new children again and again, and may your sons be many, like the house of the patriarch Jacob.

But understand this, Tornik. Many children are no credit to their parents if they grow up untaught and turn out badly. Do you know what a disgrace such children are to the parents who bore them? Work to give your children a good education while they are young, while they are still green shoots, soft as wax. If you let them thicken and harden, teaching them gets difficult, because everything has its own season. Do not let the right season slip past.

Keep your life and your conduct straight, Tornik. Walk straight, so that your children follow you. Do not be like the crab, who walks sideways herself and then instructs her young, walk straight.⁵ You can

be sure they will answer, "Papa, we can see how you walk."

I charge you solemnly, Tornik. In everything you do in your life, keep straight. Straight dealing builds the people's confidence and trust in you, and that is how you will win a good name and honor among them.

The greatest moral wealth you can have, Tornik, is to draw the people's love and goodwill toward you. All the gold in the world does not weigh as much. You live in one village, off by itself. Do not tell me the circle of your virtue is too narrow. It is enough and more than enough, Tornik, if first you are loved and respected by the people of one village. A good name has wings. It flies from village to village, it reaches as far as Van, and it spreads through the whole land of Vaspurakan. Remember Hako the shepherd, and remember the name our village's great householders had, known through all the villages.

Now ask, Tornik, what the moral means are, the good works that raise a man's worth and his name in people's eyes. Here they are. To love, to do good, to have a merciful heart. Not only to give a hungry man bread, but to crumble the bread into his *tanapur*, the poor man's yogurt soup, with your own hand. To take a fallen, unlucky family by the hand. To protect people who have been wronged, and the rest along with it. You read the Gospel, Tornik, and you will remember that on the day of judgment Jesus sets aside all the many other virtues of good men and speaks most about the mercy of the merciful. They took in the homeless, helpless strangers left in the street. They went to see the poor and the sick who had no one. They visited the prisoners. They gave bread to the hungry and water to the thirsty.⁶ And who received all this kindness at the hands of the merciful? Plainly it was the oppressed and afflicted part of the people, the ones who cannot pay their benefactors back. So Christ pays the poor man's debt. And do you know what He pays with? The kingdom of heaven, for a piece of bread and a cup of water.

But you should know this too, Tornik. People do not love a man for nothing, and they give no thanks for what they have not received. Does the beggar at the door bless you before the bread is in his hand? Does a man who has been helped open his mouth to thank you before he has been given anything? In this world everything is an exchange.

Yes, there are mouths that never thank anyone, mouths that often repay a kindness with ingratitude. Spiteful and graceless, they may even pay you back with harm, and tie the very hand that helped them, until the man regrets his kindness and does no more good.

But leave those reckonings aside, Tornik. Listen to the Gospel, which commands us to do good to the people who hate us.⁷ Maybe they do not deserve it. But have you not seen that our Father in heaven gives His rain to our fields alike, making no distinction between the wicked and the good, and makes His light-giving sun rise the same way over the whole world? A kindness works like a powerful medicine. It softens a wicked man's spirit and turns the bitterness in his heart, when he sees that his malice has been answered with good, and that good burns like fire on his conscience. This is why Paul says, "In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head."⁸ Nothing works better than answering evil with good, every time. Goodness is water, and it puts out the fire.

Charity is a duty a man takes on freely, out of fellow feeling and Christian love, setting aside part of what he owns for the needy among his people. But charity alone is not what makes the people love a man and know him for a benefactor. It is his own personal worth, his upright life, that raise a good man's standing before the people. Let me set out for you, Tornik, what those virtues of the soul are.

Faith in the church of our fathers. A reverent and honest devotion to God. A gentle and kindly nature. Love that loves its neighbor as much as itself. Justice that divides its own share and its neighbor's share equally. A good conscience that never harms or cheats a neighbor, and would

rather be cheated than cheat. A public spirit that always thinks of the people's good and the people's interest. A cheerful generosity, which the people love. And great undertakings for the common benefit, a church, a school, a hospital, a poorhouse, an orphanage, gifts of every kind, bequests and the rest, whatever the people's life and progress require.

And then there are the men who give themselves away, whether they belong to the clergy or to the laity. They put themselves wholly at the people's service, sparing nothing, sacrificing everything, their own lives too if it comes to that. Then the people are not content just to love them. They want to worship them. Even when such men die they are not forgotten. The people keep their names like a feast day, and raise a lasting monument to their memory.

There it is, Tornik. That is what love of the people brings. Work to earn that reward and that honor, so that after your death you remain immortalized. The people will remember you, and bless your memory.

Dear Tornik, I still have things to say to you. But today I want you to call our village's priests, the householders and the *hambans*, the great men of the village. Papik owes the village people his last farewell. I have lived among them all this time, and had a great deal of their respect and their honor. I have my testament's commands for them, just as I have for you.

Welcome, my dear villagers, light of my eyes. You see that Papik is laid down, and there is no hope of his getting up again. I called you here to say my last goodbye to you and set out on my road, the road that leads straight to heaven. Papik, His servant, believes he will be found worthy to see his Lord.

Do you remember Tornik's wedding day? You ate the wedding meal, you drank the wine of Shahpaz, and you started up your happy songs. We have eaten Tornik's meal, may we eat Papik's in good time. Now the

day has come, and you will eat my soul-meal.

Eat it and enjoy it, dear villagers. But along with the meal you must eat Papik's last counsels. You know that for years now I have given my Tornik many lessons and much advice, both about the happy life of a village and about the soil and the progress of the farmer's art. And at the last I laid it on Tornik as a testament that he should pass those same lessons on to your children.

And now, with a living voice, I leave you my testament. Papik lies on his deathbed and still wants to talk to you. Listen to what I say, good villagers.

The Lord God has given the village people the best share of this world's beauty. Do you see it? To you He gave the broad fields for plowing, the mountains, the valleys, the rivers, the springs, all of it covered in plants and flowers of every kind, and God Himself tends them. You live in the very garden of nature, and you enjoy the abundant, endless good things that nature gives, while the townspeople live outside that garden. What they enjoy are the great buildings they put up with their own hands. All their splendors are fleeting and changeable, here today and gone tomorrow. But your splendor, which Providence prepared long ago, is here and stays here. The fields, the mountains, the plants, the rivers, the springs are always there, always the same. The one thing a man must know is how to enjoy the rich good things that nature has prepared for him.

What the Lord God said to Adam He is still saying to Adam's children today. Work the earth, and keep it. You know from experience that a field with no wheat sown in it grows no wheat, that no tree grows without planting and watering, that without the labor of farming no one can draw a yield from the earth and gather it into his barn. A farmer's life bears fruit only through work. The farmer lives by the soil, and lives happily, and once he has fed himself, he gives the city people their

bread as well.

So with your land, your fields, your mountains, your milk cows and sheep and your other useful animals, you are far, far richer than the townspeople. As a villager, and a man who has learned by experience, Papik gives you this advice. Never, never leave the village. Never leave the soil and go and live in the city. Know that you will be wretched there. When you lose the soil, your life is lost with the soil. Want and misery will overtake you, and then you will be trapped in despair, with no other hope left in front of you but exile for bread, casting off your family, leaving your children with no one to care for them, going into a foreign country to suffer at cruel work, trading away the sweet and free labor of the fields, and, oh, carrying loads on your back. Giving up the green meadows of the village, the plow-handle and the yoked oxen, the trees and the flowers, the cool mountains, the water of springs that never die, the sweet healthy air, the milk and the *madzun*, our curdled yogurt, the cream and the butter, and all the many natural, patriarchal pleasures that the mother country gives her children. Papik knows the bitter life of exile all too well, and many of you know it too. Work, work, so that you never taste the bitterness of life in a foreign land. And I will pray for you, my fellow villagers, that you never see the face of exile, and that you find your bread in the mother country.

But you know, devout villagers, that people do not live by bread alone. You go to church, you listen to the Gospel. Hear what Jesus says. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by the word of God."⁹ If our body lives by bread, the soul has to live too. The soul's life and the soul's bread are God's commandments, and the first of the commandments is love. So people live by love, and they live by one another.

Let me give you a plain example. One yoke of oxen cannot pull a gutan. One man cannot carry a millstone, or the beam of an oil press, and set it in its place. Everything hard in this world, men have learned to do with the joined strength of a community. You know it from

experience. When something heavy falls on our village, we all join together, and that is how we get it done. Do you remember, some years back, when the Kurds raided our village's sheep and drove them off? Every young man in the village turned out, some on horseback, some on foot. They took scythes instead of swords, and they went and brought the stolen flock back. Now tell me yourselves, could one man have brought back the whole village's stolen flock?

So now you understand that people live by helping one another. Ask why they live by one another. Listen, and I will put it plainly. Everywhere in this world, in village and city alike, people's lives are unequal. One is rich, another poor. One is a lord, another common folk. One is a master, another a servant. One is a householder, and another a laborer. It is exactly this inequality that binds people to one another and makes a society. It binds the people to the lord, the servant to the master, the poor man to the rich, the way our village's poor laborers are bound to the rich householders.

Tell me, if those laborers were not poor, would they agree to put their necks under the heavy yoke of service? "Poverty humbles a man," holy Scripture says.¹⁰ Otherwise, a man who feels his own worth never stoops to serve. But would it be a good thing if every man alike were free, and rich, and an agha? No. Then the order of this world would break down. The Armenians have a proverb. "I am an agha, you are an agha. Who will grind our grain?"¹¹ Yes, the servant and the miller have to make the flour, so that the agha can eat his bread without going to the mill.

The greatest part of the world's people are workmen, laborers, farmhands and servants, and it is the fruit of their poured-out sweat that feeds the world. By the eternal law of Providence, human society is arranged so that people live by one another. You see it with your own eyes, and you know it from experience. Our village life is unequal too. One part of us are landowners and householders, and another part are

hired laborers, who trade their bitter sweat for a very small wage. Never cut your laborers' wages, and never put them off from today to tomorrow. The Lord God commands that a hired laborer's wage must not be held back until evening, that is, the day must not pass over it,¹² because the protest of the reapers rises all the way to heaven, and God rebuked the landowners of Israel through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah. Do not treat your laborers with cruel harshness. I have seen men torment them past all measure, curse them, hit them with their fists, and cheat them on top of it. You are not the laborers' master. God is, and He will avenge them and judge the case of those who were wronged. The more kindly and justly you deal with the men who work your fields, the better and the more profitable it is for you. They will be more loyal and more faithful, they will work with all their heart, and the yield of the land will bring the master far more.

Householder brothers, never count the free working men, your laborers, as contemptible slaves, and never treat them with contempt. You go to church, you listen to the Gospel. Do you really not know, have you not understood, that Jesus formed all His faithful, great and small, rich and poor, lord and people, master and servant, equally into one brotherhood of love, and said, "You are all brothers"?¹³

By that word Jesus does not abolish the honor and respect due to each class and rank of human society. He does not. Paul the Apostle, explaining these words of Christ, teaches us to give every man the honor and the respect that belong to his station, and to do it morally as well.¹⁴ The Gospel's debt of love makes no distinctions. Whatever his position and his rank, every man owes it to his neighbor. And when it came to outward debts, Jesus spoke decisively, and He acted on it. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."¹⁵

My turn has come to speak to you, villager brothers. Be conscientious in what you owe, and stand faithful always in paying your debts, whoever they are owed to. But the first, the greatest, the most

important debt of a subject people, the one no man may shirk, is the taxes of the state, which the people of the land, townsman and villager, are bound to pay exactly and in good faith. A man who cheats and defrauds in these dues is guilty, not only before the laws of the land, but before God's revealed commandments.

Always work to pay the state's taxes exactly, and to pay them on time. Do not let them pile up and grow heavy on you, until you are forced to sell what you have to pay the tax. And what do you have? Land and plow oxen. If you sell them, you are selling your life, and you will die alive, in misery.

I put our village's poor in your care, kind-hearted householders. Divide the state's taxes straight and just. Lay the burden light on the poorest houses, and those of you who can, take the poor men's burden on yourselves. Know that a man who carries his neighbor's burden fulfills the great law of the commandment of love.

After the state's dues, I know it, our villagers owe a great deal to the townspeople too. The unluckiest of them are the ones who sold their land to pay their debts. And some, mortgaging their fields, pile debt on debt at heavy, heavy interest, and the end of it is unlucky and bitter, because at the last they will not be able to pay, and then the creditor will have the right to seize your fields.

So Papik gives you this advice. First, work so that you never go into debt at all. And when hardship and need press down on you, when there is no way out and you must borrow, work to pay off the small debt quickly, before it has grown. In matters of debt be honest, always. Whether you are taking or giving, practice no deceit at all. Deal straight, and keep your accounts straight. A village people's credit and honor rest on their honesty. Whoever cheats and denies what he owes, his credit and his honor are dead from that day on in the townsman's eyes. Whoever he turns to, whoever he begs, he will not be able to borrow.

You will say, Papik, do you not know your own villager, who knows neither writing nor arithmetic? How is he supposed to know his accounts and keep them? All he has is an unwritten reckoning in his head, with nothing on paper, and so he often forgets, and takes refuge in denial.

That is all true. You confess it with your own mouths, and I bear witness along with you. The one great cause that wrecks a villager's house is that he knows neither writing nor arithmetic. The management of our lives has to be done with writing and accounts, because a man's mind is forgetful. What he does today he forgets tomorrow. Writing and arithmetic were invented to keep what is in our minds from being forgotten. A man with no writing and no accounts has a household in disorder, and he takes the loss on every deal he makes. I have said this to you many times, and today, for the last time, I hand you my advice as a testament.

Take care of our village school, so that your boys are educated and learn writing and arithmetic. You let your own season pass. You have lived without accounts, and you will die without accounts. At the very least let your boys be educated, and become men who know something and understand the business of running their own lives. The townsman does everything with writing and accounts. Why should the villager not know his accounts like the townsman? What a shame it is for a villager, when he has been cheated, to start grumbling, the townsman cheated me, and so on. Is a villager not a man? Does he have no reason? Yes, we are men too. Only, the eye of our reason is shut with ignorance. We have eyes, and we go about the world like blind men, and that is why the townsman counts us dull and stupid, and sometimes insults us further and calls us idiots outright. That unbearable insult will never be lifted from us as long as we have no schooling and no learning. As long as the eye of our mind is not opened, we will go on lost in this world. And you know that the lost man's road through life is full of the thorns of misery,

and it ends in ruin.

So, dear villagers, to be saved from that road to ruin we need a straight road that does not wander. And what is it that opens the straight road in front of our eyes? Not the sun of the day, and not the lantern and the lamp of the night. No. The lights of this world are not enough for our lives if there is no light in the mind, and that light is learning and education, which a man receives from his childhood years. So educate your small children, so that they grow up to be men, and the eye of their mind is opened, and they do not go about the world like blind men. Educate your girls too, so that they become sensible housekeepers and good mothers. You should know that the building of a house, and the well-ordered running of it, is done by the women's hands alone. Are women not human? Do they have no soul, no mind? The Lord God gave a wife to a man for more than bearing children. He gave her as a companion and a helper, to be his partner in work. The man works in the field, the woman in the house. Have you ever seen one ox pull a *haror*, the light one-yoke plow? Husband and wife are a matched pair in the yoke, and if we look closely, the heavier share of the work lies on the women. After the poor women have nursed the children they bore, how heavy and hard it is for them to see to all the business of the household besides. Listen, and I will count out for you, one by one, the tasks of a village woman's work. Every day she kneads the dough and bakes bread in front of the scorching *tonir*, the sunken clay oven. She cooks the food and carries bread out to the laborers in the field. Morning and evening she milks the buffalo cows and the cows, and goes to the *peratekh*, the milking ground, to milk the ewes. She sees to all the dairy work, beats the churn or the churning skin, makes the butter and the cheese. She looks after the guests. Often enough she cleans out the stables. She bakes the thin *ptir* bread. She builds up the fuel store and gets the winter's fuel ready. She cards the wool and spins it, knits stockings and footlets and works other things of homespun. She washes, sews and patches. She goes out over field and mountain

gathering dye flowers and roots. She weaves patterned carpets. Which of them shall I name next? There are still many other tasks that have fallen to the village women's share, and the poor women carry all of it in silent obedience. And you know it, and you see it. Some of these hardworking women take savage beatings from their brutal, conscienceless husbands, and hear themselves cursed on top of it.

I know the answer you will give me. Eh, Papik, what kind of talk is this? If we do not beat our graceless, sharp-tongued wives and knock them about, how are we to keep them in hand? And you advise us to let the girls learn to read like the boys. Do you know what will happen then? Their minds will open. They will get sharp tongues and lose all shame. They will answer back boldly to everything. They will tear away the veil of their natural modesty and break the yoke of obedience, and then you will see the war between husband and wife. The peace of the house will be wrecked, and our old patriarchal rule and order will fall apart. We learned it from our grandfathers, that women should keep quiet and say nothing. That is why our brides have learned to stay tongue-bound for seven years in the house,¹⁶ and speak to no one but their own husbands, and not in front of people either, only in private. If our girls learn to read, and then marry and become brides, will their tongues be held then? Especially if they become learned, and read books, and find out about the world. And leave all that aside. Do peasant girls even have the time to go to school and learn reading and writing? Who is going to see to the work of our house and our fields?

We have been to Bolis and back, and we have seen it and we know it. Once the women of Bolis learned reading and writing, every one of them turned into a clever lawyer. Their poor husbands have become prisoners in their hands. They even dare to lodge complaints with the Armenian Patriarchate and drag their husbands into court. We see these things, and we are afraid. Better that our wives stay ignorant and obey us.

I understand what you are saying, dear villagers. Now listen, and let me answer. Some forty years ago, I confess it honestly, Papik thought and talked exactly as you do. But once I learned to read, and got a taste for books, and in my years of exile saw with my own eyes the things of the world and how they change, from then on my thinking began to change too. You should know that time changes everything as it goes. And you, what do you think? Do you want to stay unchanged in your old ways? If you stay in the state you are in now, still as standing water, and do not go forward like the streams of living rivers, you will dry up and wither in ignorance and misery. A man has to walk with the times. He who lags behind goes hungry for bread. And know this, in this world it is the ignorant, above all, who have the wretched and miserable lives.

There was a time when townsman and villager alike were ignorant, and they lived on equal terms in their ignorance. Now the townsman goes forward with his schools, and boys and girls are educated equally. If we villagers get no schooling, even a little, if not as much as the townsman's, then we will be slaves in front of the townspeople, because it is ignorance that makes a man a slave and a captive. This is why the townsman goes forward and grows rich, while the villager stays behind and sinks into poverty.

You suppose, and you argue, that when girls learn writing and reading they turn sharp-tongued and graceless, and lose their natural modesty and decency into the bargain. That judgment of yours is very wrong, and the proof is right in front of our eyes. Our own village runs to more than two hundred houses. The women of our village are all equally ignorant, and not one of them can write or read. Now tell me, are these graceless, sharp-tongued women you talk about in any short supply among them? You do not yet understand that ignorance is the source of every bad character, and that a woman's ignorance does more harm to a household than a man's. Listen to what Solomon the wise says. "The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down

with her own hands."¹⁷ You suppose that building a house, making it prosper, keeping it up, is the men's work alone, and that women count for nothing in the building. But the building of a house and its fullness are in the women's hands. You bring in the earnings of the field and pour them into the house. But if the wife is ignorant and foolish, if she does not know how to govern a house, does not know how its needs must be supplied, or how to manage with measure and thrift, then you will watch the year's provisions used up in half a year. No flour left in the bin, no butter, no cheese, no other stores in the larder. Managing a house takes wit and wisdom, and when the mistress has none, the house begins to come apart from the inside.

Leave aside the material fabric of a house and the managing of its bread. For a house, for a family line, to stand firm, what it needs even more is a moral fabric, and if that fabric does not hold the house up, the material one will soon fall in. And what is it that builds a house's moral fabric from the foundation? Listen, and I will tell you. It is the mother's teaching and the mother's care. And how can a mother teach the little ones she has borne, when she herself is untaught and ignorant? This is why our children turn out badly. The mothers know so little that they cannot even feed the children they gave birth to properly. That is the reason our children die so young, so very young. It is strange. Many people think the village population has more children and is multiplying. That opinion is very wrong. We see that not even half of those born survive. The poor children die as victims of their mothers' lack of schooling. And we have no right to blame those mothers. Do you think bearing and raising children is an easy thing? Children are not the wild grass of our fields, which grows and grows strong by itself with no one tending it. Only an educated mother's care knows how to nourish and raise her children well.

Do not suppose, and do not tell me, that milk and bread are enough to raise a child on. The birds and the animals care for their young only

that far. As soon as the fledglings' wings have grown, they fly off and look after themselves. And the calves, once they are weaned, begin to go out to the field, to graze, and to find their own feed.

Come now, dear villagers. Do you not know that you are creatures who can reason, and that your lives are nothing like the lives of birds and animals? When the Lord God laid His curse on Adam He said, you shall eat your bread by the sweat of your brow. That is, you will earn your bread with grinding labor. But to the birds and the animals He said nothing of the kind, because the heavenly Father feeds them, as Jesus tells us.¹⁸ If we live by bread alone, then we turn into animals. That is why Jesus said, man does not live by bread alone, but by the word of God.

And what do you say? Is God's word, is the kingdom of heaven, only for men? Do women have no share in it? Are they shut out? Did God give the book of Scripture, the law, the commandment, the Gospel, to men alone? No, He did not. The Lord God gave His commandment to Adam and to Eve equally, and He handed His divine commandments down to their descendants equally, through Moses and through Jesus.

So womankind too must know and understand those divine commandments, which are held in the Old and the New Testament. And how is a woman to read and understand the word of God if she does not learn it in school from the time she is small, so that later, grown up, she becomes an educated mother, able to teach the small children she bears? Do you not know that those little ones are handed over to the teaching and care of their mother alone? Fathers take no trouble over it, village fathers least of all, taken up as they are with their work in the fields. Who first teaches a child to make the sign of the cross on his face? The Christian mother. Who answers every question of a curious child, sweetly, with a mother's tenderness, and never tires of it? The mother. When a child turns his eyes up toward heaven, and sees the bright things on the face of the blue sky, and asks what they are, who answers?

The mother. She tells him, those are the sun, the moon and the stars, and God made them for us, to give light by day and by night. And when the child sees the things close around him and asks about those, who answers them all? The mother again. Yes, a child learns his language from his mother. God, and the things of God, he learns from his mother too. People think that children must learn all this only from the schoolmaster or the *vardapet*, the preaching priest. It is not so. Listen, and let me explain. Our newborn babies are carried to church. The priest baptizes them in the font. The godfather stands as interpreter for the speechless child, and asking for faith, hope and love, makes the Christian confession in the child's place. But who baptizes the child in the font of its own home? That baptizer, that natural priest, is the very mother who bore it. When the child's tongue and mind begin to open, she begins to teach it the short, plain, natural lessons of Christianity. She sows the seeds of the holy faith in its young heart, and they bud, little by little, as the child grows.

Now do you see that the first natural and great teacher and educator, in the family school of the home, is the mother who bore the child? We are not wrong if we say that in Christian learning and in a child's first schooling, the first schoolmaster, the first *vardapet*, the first theologian and tutor is the mother, and above all the devout mother, who does not teach with words only, but educates her children by her own good motherly example. Look at our churchgoing village mothers. They take their babies in their arms and go to church, light candles in front of the images of the Holy Mother of God and of the Cross, kneel, and pray. And the child, watching its mother do this, takes the impression of it like a seal on its clean young heart. Then it grows a little and begins to ask. Mayrik, who is the Holy Mother of God? Who is Christ? Why was Christ crucified? How did He rise again and go up into heaven? And the unschooled, ignorant mother cannot tell the child about Christ's birth, or about anything else He did.

Do you understand now, villager brothers, that the mothers are the first and only teachers and educators of their own children? That is enough. I have preached you a sermon and a lecture as long as a vardapet's. Keep this last testament of mine. From now on see to it that your children, boys and girls alike, are educated. As I said in my Tornik's lessons, our village schools have no great expenses. If every house gives one *kot* of wheat at threshing time, all the school's charges are covered. I know you have many troubles and many taxes to see to. But the school tax is so necessary, and so profitable, that it will be the cure for all those troubles of yours. You do not understand these words now. You will understand them on the day you see what education produces, and then you will remember me, and say a God-have-mercy for Papik's soul.

Dear villagers, I think that is enough and more than enough. Keep my counsel and my testament, and leave them to your children as an inheritance. There was much more to say to you, but my breath is spent, and I cannot go on. Goodbye, and peace be with you. Pray for me, that a good angel takes my soul gently. I am not worthy of the shining court of the kingdom of heaven. It is more than enough for me to be a servant and a doorkeeper at its gate.¹⁹ Pray for me from the earth, and I, kneeling in spirit before the gate of the kingdom of heaven, will pray to God our benefactor to have mercy on the whole world, and on our poor Armenian nation. Amen.

Well, dear Tornik, the time has come for me to give up my soul. The angel is waiting. I have one last testament left for you all. Carry it out with complete faithfulness and exactness, and so inherit Papik's blessing.

I am dying, Tornik. Carry me out and bury me in our walled field, the one near the graveyard. Have my grave dug in the corner of the field where the poplars and the willows stand. You know how often Papik, worn out with work, went and sat under those trees to rest. Sometimes

he even laid his head against a tree trunk and slept sweetly. Now I will sleep in the grave, until Gabriel sounds his trumpet.

When you plow that field where my grave is, and sow it with wheat, here is my instruction. From the clean wheat of that field grind flour, enough of it, and give it to the village priest, so that he can make the *nshkhar*, the wafer bread, and offer the Liturgy for Papik's soul on the days of the dead of the five tagavar feasts.²⁰ In the same way, when you gather our vineyard, pick out the good ripe grapes with your own hand and press them, prepare the whole year's chalice wine, and give it to the priest to keep in the church.

Prepare my soul-meal generously. At your wedding we killed the black crooked ox. Now look again. Among our gutan oxen there is never a shortage of crooked ones, the kind that will not pull level with their yoke-fellow and are forever dragging the share out of the furrow. If there are any, kill them, make them a *matagh*, an offering, for Papik's soul, and feed all the village's poor until they are full. And now send someone quickly to the monastery of Varag. Have them call Daniel vardapet, who is a good worker for the village's progress. Let him come and bury me, and say the office of the dead. Give a young buffalo calf to the monastery of Varag as a soul-portion, because it is thanks to that monastery that we learned to read.

Tornik, set up a *khachkar*, a carved cross-stone, over my grave, and have my memorial carved on it in these words. "This is the tomb of Papik of Archak, who loved the soil and the plow-handle, taught his Tornik the lessons of farming, handed down his testament, and died. You who pass by, say God have mercy on Papik's soul."

The hour of my soul's leaving is coming, Tornik. Call your mayrik. Call Shushan and her children. Come all together and kiss Papik's hand, take my last blessing, and go out. Leave me alone, so that I can rest a moment and give up my soul.

My good guardian angel, you have stood over my head like a watchman. Do you see? My whole body is swimming in the sweat of death. It is the same sweat I used to pour out in the field, and this is the last of it, the sweat I pour for death. I have no more need of this world's bread. May I only be worthy of the bread of the kingdom of heaven.

Good angel, I owe you a great deal. From the swaddling clothes of my birth to this dying state of mine, you have kept me safe. Many times I grieved you, and many times I gladdened you. When I sinned, you turned your face away in sorrow. When I repented, you rejoiced. In all my life I do not know how much you wept, or how much you laughed. Blessed be God, in this last hour, as my soul goes out, you look very bright. My spirit fills with hope. I believe I will give up my soul in faith. I ask only one thing, angel of death. Tell me, when you have taken my soul, where will you carry it?

Do you not know, Papik, you who have studied the book, that the souls of the faithful must first come up before Christ the Judge? Only the Judge who examines them assigns to men's souls their portion and their places. Do not trouble yourself over it. The house of Christ's Father is very wide, and it has many rooms made ready.²¹

Then I beg you, good angel, speak for me before Christ. I want no house and no room. I am a man of the field, a farmer, trained to work. From the fields of the kingdom of heaven I ask only one little plot, to plow and to sow. I know the kingdom's fields are far richer and more fruitful than the fields of this world, which push up thistle and thorn and weeds among the grain.

Poor Papik. You have given your mind to the soil and to work, and you do not know what you are saying. It seems to me you have forgotten the words of Jesus' Gospel. Perhaps old age has brought its dotage on you. Do you not know that in the kingdom all labor has ceased for mortal men? Blessed be Christ, who lifted from your

grandfather Adam that curse, the one that said by the sweat of your face you shall eat your bread. Understand, Papik, that in the kingdom there is no labor, no sweat, no pain, no suffering, none of it. The kingdom is nothing but the enjoyment of God's glory. Men of flesh become angels like us. No bread is needed there, no water, no clothing. Man and angel alike are filled with the glory of God and bathe in light. But this much I will tell you, Papik. Every man born will reap whatever he has sown in this world.²² Whatever he has done, he will be repaid by the measure of his works. For good works the portion is Christ's kingdom, and for evildoers, hell.

That much I know, good angel. And still, in this narrow minute of my dying, I want to learn one thing from you. If every man is to reap in the world beyond whatever he has sown in this one, then there is work for me in the kingdom of heaven. What I sowed here will have come up there, and by now it is ripe. Let me take my scythe with me, so that I can reap what I sowed.

You say there is no eating and drinking in the kingdom. Then what is that rich table which Christ prepares for those He loves, where He girds Himself and serves at the table with His own hands?²³ Papik would love to work, and make the bread for that heavenly table. Can there be a table without bread, or wine without planting a vineyard? I am a laborer of bread. Let Noah, the patriarch of Masis, plant the vineyard and make the wine.²⁴

You are very simple, Papik. The things you say. Jesus came into the world and told you everything in the Gospel. He became a man like you, and He saw men, and tested them, and testified that the children of this world are wiser than the children of light.²⁵ But you astonish me, Papik, wanting to joke with the angel of death. Do you not know that angels do not like jokes? Zechariah made one joke out of unbelief, and he was punished on the spot.²⁶ You say, let me take my scythe with me, as if we angels had no reaping scythe of our own. Have you not read the book of

Revelation, and the scythes that appear in the visions of the prophets?²⁷ In one night we reaped a hundred and eighty thousand men out of Sennacherib's army as it besieged Jerusalem.²⁸ And this astonishes me even more, that you want a little field given to you in the kingdom, and that you would make the bread for the kingdom's table.

Come, Papik, you cannot grasp the heavenly banquet now. Its table is immortal, its bread is immortal, its wine is immortal. Who are you, a mortal and helpless man, to presume to make bread for that table, which Jesus alone prepared, with His Cross and with His blood? Say no more, Papik. The hour is late. Give up your soul. Believe, and be at peace. God knows how to reward His faithful servants. I know, Papik, that your wages are great in heaven. You have paid the debt of loving your neighbor, you have cheated no one, you have eaten your bread by the sweat of your brow to this very day, and now you will fall asleep with a good death.

Papik was holding fast to his soul, and he wanted to keep talking. But when he saw that the angel had no patience left, he crossed his hands on his heart, closed his failing eyes, and murmured his last words. He said, there, take my soul, good angel. And Papik gave up his soul as lightly and as easily as a man takes an apple out of his coat, an apple that had hung eighty-two years on the tree of life, and was red all through and fully ripe.

The apple dropped from the tree, and the angel reached down from above, caught it, and flew away.

So Papik died. He gave up his soul, and with his soul he ended his PAPIK AND TORNIK as well.

God have mercy on the soul of Papik the patriarch. Amen.

(THE END)

1. Genesis 3:19.
2. Quoted as holy Scripture. Cf. 1 Samuel 2:31-32, where the loss of an elder out of the house is Eli's curse, here turned into a blessing.
3. Cf. Matthew 6:19-20, "where thieves break in and steal."
4. Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:2-3.
5. The fable of the crab and her young (Aesop).
6. Matthew 25:34-40.
7. Matthew 5:44-45.
8. Romans 12:20.
9. Matthew 4:4.
10. Quoted as Scripture. The exact text is uncertain. Cf. Proverbs 10:4 in the Septuagint reading, "poverty humbles a man."
11. The Armenian proverb turns on the pun of agha, "lord," and aghal, "to grind."
12. Deuteronomy 24:14-15. Cf. James 5:4 (the cry of the reapers) and Isaiah 5:8.
13. Matthew 23:8.
14. Romans 13:7.
15. Matthew 22:21.
16. The custom of the bride's ritual silence (*munj*) before her husband's elders, kept in the patriarchal households of the Armenian provinces sometimes for years at a time.
17. Proverbs 14:1.
18. Matthew 6:26.
19. Cf. Psalm 84:10, "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God."
20. The five tagavar (tabernacle) feasts of the Armenian Church. The day after each is a *merelots*, a day of remembrance of the dead. The *nshkhar* is the unleavened wafer-bread of the Liturgy.
21. John 14:2.
22. Galatians 6:7.
23. Luke 12:37.
24. Genesis 9:20, Noah the farmer, who planted a vineyard at the foot of Ararat (Masis).
25. Luke 16:8.
26. Luke 1:20.
27. Revelation 14:14-19.



28. 2 Kings 19:35, where the source's "hundred and eighty thousand" stands for the 185,000 of the text.



An old grandfather teaches his grandson to plow and sow, to reap and thresh, to keep sheep and plant trees, to marry well and to die well. Khrimian Hayrik wrote it in exile, as a book for the Armenian peasant, and under the farming lessons runs his argument that the villager's labor and land are what the nation is built on.

“Tornik, you are the staff of my old age.”

