

Committee of Mercy Letter and Pamphlet

1916 letter and pamphlet urging for financial assistance to help the victims of the Armenian Genocide

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One of the signatories on the letter is Elihu Root (Nobel Peace Prize Winner, 1912)

www.nobelprize.org/peace/laureates/1912/root-bio.html

Elihu Root – Biography (Excerpted)

From Nobel Lectures, Peace 1901-1925, Editor Frederick W. Haberman, Elsevier Publishing Company, Amsterdam, 1972

Elihu Root (February 15, 1845-February 7, 1937), who became one of the most brilliant administrators in American history, was born in Clinton, New York, son of a professor of mathematics at Hamilton College. Perhaps it was inevitable that the father and Elihu's elder brother, who was also a mathematician, should be nicknamed «Cube» and «Square». At Hamilton College, Elihu was graduated first in his class in 1864 at the age of nineteen. He taught school for one year, was graduated from the Law School of New York University in 1867, founded a law firm after one year of practice, and by the age of thirty had established himself as a prominent lawyer specializing in corporate affairs. He became a wealthy man in the thirty or so years which he devoted to legal practice, acting as counsel to banks, railroads, and some of the great financiers of the day. His comprehensive grasp of legal principles, his formidable power of analysis, his creative genius in discovering solutions to problems, his disciplined attention to detail, and his skill in expression, whether written or oral, earned him recognition from his colleagues as the leader of the American bar.

As secretary of war from 1899 to 1904, Root performed the services that moved Henry L. Stimson, himself a later secretary of war, to say that «no such intelligent, constructive, and vital force» had occupied that post in American history¹. He reorganized the administrative system of the War Department, established new procedures for promotion, founded the War College, enlarged West Point, opened schools for special branches of the service, created a general staff, strengthened control over the National Guard, restored discipline within the department. He was most concerned, however, about the three dependencies acquired as a result of the war. He devised a plan for returning Cuba to the Cubans; wrote a democratic charter for the governance of the Philippines, designing it to insure free government, to protect local customs, and to bring eventual self-determination; and eliminated tariffs on Puerto Rican goods imported into the United States.

He returned to his private legal practice in 1904, but in 1905 at President Theodore Roosevelt's invitation, accepted the post of secretary of state. His record is impressive. He brought the

consular service under Civil Service, thus removing it from the «spoils system»; maintained the «open door» policy in the Far East, a policy he had helped to formulate as secretary of war; negotiated the so-called «Gentlemen's Agreement» with Japan which dealt with emigration of Japanese to America; strengthened amicable relations with South America in 1906 during an unprecedented diplomatic tour; sponsored the Central American Peace Conference held in Washington in 1907 which resulted in the creation of the Central American Court of Justice, an international tribunal for the judicial settlement of disputes; negotiated some forty reciprocal arbitration treaties; along with Lord Bryce, resolved current American-Canadian problems and instituted the Permanent American-Canadian Joint High Commission for the settlement of future problems.

A United States senator from 1909 to 1915, Elihu Root took an active role in settling the North Atlantic fisheries dispute, in opposing a bill which would have exempted U.S. shipping from paying tolls to use the Panama Canal while levying charges against other nations' shipping, and in pressing for international arbitration.

In 1915 he declined candidacy for reelection to the Senate and even declined, at least publicly, nomination by the Republican Party for the presidency of the United States. Although seventy years of age, he continued to be active as an elder statesman. He opposed Woodrow Wilson's neutrality policy but supported him during the war; he accepted Wilson's appointment as ambassador extraordinary to head a special diplomatic mission to Russia in 1917; on the 1919 Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations he took a middle stance between Wilson on the one hand and the «irreconcilables» on the other; as a delegate to the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922, he took a leading role in drafting the Five-Power Treaty limiting naval armament.

Root dedicated a large portion of his life to the cause of international arbitration. He, more than any other, formulated the plan to create the Central American Court of Justice. In 1907 he instructed the American delegates to the Hague Conference to support the founding of a World Court; in 1920, at the request of the Council of the League of Nations, he served on a committee to devise plans for the Permanent Court of International Justice which was set up in 1921; in 1929 after intermittent discussion between the League and the United States concerning certain reservations the Senate had insisted upon in its 1926 ratification of the Protocol for U. S. participation in the court, Root, on his eighty-fourth birthday, left for Geneva where he convinced the delegates from fifty-five nations to accept a revised Protocol; he later appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to urge ratification, but the Senate failed to act at that time and eventually declined to ratify at all.

Root was the first president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and helped to found its European counterpart. He believed that international law, along with its accompanying machinery, represented mankind's best chance to achieve world peace, but like the hardheaded realist he was, he also believed that it would take much time, wisdom, patience, and toil to implement it effectively.

¹ Quoted by Henry L. Stimson in *Addresses Made in Honor of Elihu Root*, p. 29.

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200 FIFTH AVENUE, New York, N. Y. *October 1916*

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For the Women and Children
Made destitute by the World War.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Washington, D. C.

9 October 1914.

My dear Mrs. Harriman:

Thank you for your letter of September twenty-ninth. Of course, you may say in the circular that I approve the plan for the Committee of Mercy. Cordially and sincerely yours,

WOODROW WILSON.

CITY OF NEW YORK
Office of the Mayor

Oct. 9, 1914.

I am glad to endorse the Committee of Mercy. Any movement or organization which has for its purpose the relief of the women and children made destitute by the war in Europe deserves the support of our citizens.

JOHN PURROY MITCHEL,
Mayor.

EUROPEAN WAR RELIEF COMMISSION
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And the Officers of the Committee

We appeal to you to help in a most desperate emergency. More than a million Armenians are facing starvation, and only by quick and generous action can their lives be saved.

Here are a million innocent unoffending people isolated from the outer world at the mercy of those from whom thousands have suffered persecution and death, appealing for the barest necessities of life. Many of them are little children, all of them are children in their helplessness.

They want bread and they must have it. They are dying from day to day, and only a few of them can be saved. Only to America can they look at this time for aid.

The enclosed circular describes in detail advice just received by the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief. Won't you read it, then won't you send us a generous contribution? We are faithfully yours,

Charles R. Crane

John Moffat

H. Wood

M. M. Mungath


W. H. Wood

Oscar S. Straus

DO WE HEAR THE CRY?

These are times that try men's souls. A pall of horror hangs over the world. The sympathies and emotions of men are in danger of exhaustion through overstrain. The safety for heart and conscience and will is to yield to the benevolent impulses and pour out relief for the suffering and needy. America is comfortable and rich. In contrast with the peace and quiet which are ours let us think of the terror and the strife in Armenia. We have safe homes and the sweet comforts of the undisturbed comradeship of those we love. Their homes are in ruins; they are in lonely exile, and in place of family comfort there are only ruined or confiscated houses, starving bodies, stunned minds, shattered nerves, bruised hearts. With loneliness and pain and terror and uncertainty and hunger and cruelty and hate they keep constant vigil. The moan of a race moves out across the heart of a stricken world.

ACT AT ONCE, GENEROUSLY AND WITH SACRIFICE

 THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE for Armenian and Syrian Relief was organized to meet this appalling need. Write to the Committee for fuller information than is found in this circular, and not only give money yourself but by personal interviews or by organizing meetings enlist others. Members of the Committee pay the expense of the Committee's work, thus making it possible to cable every dollar given for relief.

Strong commissions, headed by American consuls and missionaries, are administering the funds.

Some are giving generously out of their abundance. Others are giving with sacrifice out of their meager income. A laboring man enclosing a savings bank check wrote, "I am out of work and have no income but I have at least my health and relatives and loved ones." The following is an extract from a typical letter received by the Committee from a minister and his wife:

"Though financially limited ourselves, receiving a salary of but \$80 per month as pastor of churches, we have decided to give one-half of this amount monthly for six months to relieve Armenians suffering and destitution, desiring the consolation only of Him who centuries ago in those lands said: I was hungry and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me."

We hold in our hands that which can give safety, satisfy hunger, drive away despair, provide shelter and cause the forsaken and battle-trampled fields to blossom into harvests.

Can we, dare we, withhold the help we can give?

SEND CHECKS TO

AUGUST BELMONT, Treasurer

Committee of Mercy (Room 336) 200 Fifth Ave., New York

ARMENIA



One Million People Starving

Won't YOU Help Them

Out of Your Abundance?

THE CRY OF A MILLION

A CRUSHING blow has fallen upon the Armenians and Syrians in Turkey, Persia, Syria and Palestine. Amid all the terrible accompaniments of the European War there is none more heartrending than this. According to the most reliable reports about 750,000 have perished by massacre, disease, and hardship. A million survivors, each with a story tragic enough to touch the hardest heart, are in dire distress. They are remote from their homes, without shelter, clothing or food, their hearts filled with despair. America is the only nation that can meet their need. Extraordinary financial prosperity, impossible but for the war, abounds here. Shall this nation fatten because of Europe's demand for our goods and forget the sorrows in the war zones? The suffering cry out in their anguish. *Will we hear and heed their appeal?*

A TRAGIC HISTORY

FOR TWENTY-FIVE centuries, between the Black and Caspian Seas, in Western Asia, the Armenians have had a home. Suffering has been their lot, perhaps beyond any other race that has ever lived. One after another—Assyrian, Persian, Parthian, Roman, Turk—has come to oppress or exploit or persecute. To-day their land is divided between Turkey, Persia, and Russia. Only yesterday they were the best educated, most skillful, most industrious, and most valuable people in the Turkish Empire.

THE BLOW THAT FELL

"ONLY YESTERDAY!" Those are fateful words! Modern history began on August 1, 1914, when Europe and Asia caught fire. The flower of Armenian manhood was called to the colors, leaving only a few men with the aged and infirm or tender youth with women and children to carry on the daily business as best they could.

In April, 1915, continuing through November, the indescribably terrible blow fell—the most tragic hour in all their tragic history came. Then began the systematic and relentlessly cruel process of crushing the Armenian race by massacre and deportation. Men were led away in groups outside their villages and killed with clubs and axes.

The consul of one of the European nations in Turkey reported that on one occasion 10,000 Armenians were taken out in boats, batteries of artillery trained on the boats as targets, and the entire company killed.

Schools and churches—the fruition of many years of toil and tears—were broken up, the students killed or scattered.

Girls and women were reserved for an indescribable fate in terrible marches, in harems, or in the houses of officials, or in the huts or tents of the wild tribes.

Villages and towns by the hundred were wrecked. The whole Armenian population of large sections was deported. Of one caravan of 600 people, the Arabs killed 500. Many thousands died of disease, torture, terror, exhaustion, hunger.

Of 450 from one village only one woman lives, she saw her husband and three sons tied together and shot with one bullet, to save ammunition. She saw her daughters outraged and then killed. She was carried away by a Kurd but escaped at night, naked, and after terrible suffering fell in with some refugees.

The blow fell heaviest upon those least able to bear it—the aged, the women, especially mothers or those about to become mothers, little children. Hundreds, thousands, perished in the first few days. The figures mount to sickening proportions, until they reach a total of more than half a million that have perished.

THE AWFUL FACTS

[Based upon best available information]

Armenian population of Turkey, Persia and Syria before the European War.....	2,000,000
Massacred or died of wounds, disease or exhaustion about	750,000
Survivors, about.....	1,200,000
Destitute and Starving Armenians, Nestorians and other native Christians in Turkey, Persia, Syria and Palestine	1,000,000
Amount of money needed to rehabilitate the destitute and starving.....	\$5,000,000

In Western Persia the refugees are returning into the district lying southeast of Lake Van and are receiving through relief commission supplies of grain, food, clothing with agricultural implements and oxen. Supplies, however, are woefully inadequate.

Ambassador Henry Morgenthau and others competent to judge say that \$5,000,000 is needed to furnish food, clothing and shelter.

One dollar will keep one person alive one month or longer.

Twenty-five dollars will enable an Armenian family to be established in comparative comfort.

Until the war ends thousands must be fed. After the war multitudes must be given assistance in reestablishing their homes, stocking their farms and securing implements and seed for their fields.