



BASKERVILLE, HOWARD C.

BASKERVILLE, HOWARD C., a teacher at the American mission in Tabrīz, killed April 19, 1909, at the age of 25 in a sally during the siege of Tabrīz.

A graduate of Princeton University (B.A., 1907), he arrived to teach science and English under a two-year contract at the Memorial School of the American Presbyterian Mission in Tabrīz shortly before the battle for the city began. Through Mīrzā Ḥosayn Šarīfzāda, a leading constitutionalist and a fellow teacher at the Memorial School he got acquainted with the Constitutional movement and many of its adherents. The assassination of Šarīfzāda in 1908 and the desperate shortage of food supplies in the besieged city, where people were dying of starvation, especially after the blockade of the city was completed by February 3, as well as his sympathy for the Constitutionalists, led him to enlist in their ranks and become an ardent supporter of the popular cause. After resigning from his post he started drilling Persian volunteers together with W. A. Moore, an Irishman and representative of several British papers in Persia. Baskerville's group, Fawj-e Najāt (Detachment of salvation) used to be trained in the courtyards of the citadel (*arg*). The U.S. State Department advised the Board of Foreign Missions in New York to have him recalled, and Baskerville was asked by the American consul in Tabrīz, William F. Doty, to give back his American passport.

With the danger of famine growing day by day the two "Europeans" advised sorties and carried out reconnaissance operations through the Royalist lines, mapping their positions. The final attempt to break the blockade took place on the night of April 19 against Qarā-Malek, a suburb of Tabrīz which was held by



the Royalists and where food was stored. Two contradictory accounts of this last sortie, during which Baskerville was killed, have been preserved. An article published in *The Times* (“The Siege of Tabriz. From an Occasional Correspondent,” July 3, 1909) thinly veils the identity of its author, W. A. Moore, who writes in a disparaging manner on the Persians taking part in the sally. He blames the setback on Sattār Khan, who failed to send in his previously offered support. Kasrawī, publishing the detailed report of Mehdī ‘Alawīzāda, one of Baskerville’s comrades-in-arms who participated in the sortie, denies that Moore had taken part in the operation and points out that, because of Baskerville’s lack of military experience, the plan had from the beginning not met with the approval of Sattār Khan (Kasrawī, pp. 894-97). Baskerville, who almost immediately assaulted the Royalist position, was shot through the heart around 6:00 p.m. The funeral at the American cemetery of Tabriz on the following day turned into a great rally; Baskerville’s men, groups of *fedā’īs*, Armenians, Georgians, American residents of Tabriz, and a great number of the inhabitants paid him the last honors.

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