

HISTORY OF ARMENIA

BY

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FATHER MICHAEL CHAMICH;
Chamichian

FROM B. C. 2247 TO THE YEAR OF CHRIST 1780,
OR 1229 OF THE ARMENIAN ERA,

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARMENIAN,

BY

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TO WHICH IS APPENDED A CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY BY THE
TRANSLATOR FROM THE YEAR 1780 TO THE PRESENT DATE.

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the death of his father Ashot to the period of his horrid murder lasted 24 years. Immediately after the death of Sumbat the troops of Iussuf by means of treachery got possession of the city of Erunjak, which they laid in ruins. After selecting the wives and sons of the chiefs, with the most comely of the inhabitants, they massacred the remainder. The former were taken to Duin where many perished through persecution. Shortly after this Iussuf having assumed the controul of Armenia, and placed Persian troops in all the cities and places of importance to overawe the people, set out on his return to Atropatia accompanied by a vast number of captives.

CHAPTER IV.

*The reign of Ashot the Second, surnamed Erkat,
or Iron.*

ON the departure of Iussuf from Armenia, Ashot the son of the deceased monarch, gathered a body of 600 men, all famed for extraordinary strength and bravery. With these he traversed the country, engaging, defeating, and expelling successively the Persian troops which Iussuf had left to guard his conquest. In a short time he became so powerful that he

A. D. 914.
Haican
era 363.

A. D. 915.
Haican
era 364.

was feared by all the neighbouring powers, and regarded with dread by Iussuf himself. Even the tyrannical Gagik, observing the signal bravery of Ashot, resolved to wave his claims in favour of the Armenian king, and to sweep the country of Vaspurakan from the pollution of the enemies of faith. The Armenians observing with gratitude the deliverance from the Persian controul, that was afforded them by Ashot, called him to the throne by the title of Ashot the Second. Many of the chiefs were however inimical to his just claims, and refused to pay him allegiance. They were a restless discontented crew, and filled the nation with noise and trouble by their repeated quarrels with one another, beside spilling a vast quantity of human blood in their frequent affrays. Gagik during these troubles advanced with troops to Nakhjuan, which he captured from Sumbat the Sisakan, who at the time of his attack was absent in Arzakh. He, however, to revenge the unprovoked hostility of Gagik, assembled troops and marched into Vaspurakan, where he destroyed many places. The peasants observing these acts of the chiefs, became insensibly inspired with the same love of disorder, and disdaining the subjection in which they had so long been held, broke out into rebellion; some of them having killed their masters took

possession of their lands. Iussuf having at length received news of the anarchy into which affairs were sunk in America, levied troops and marched into that devoted country. The soldiers giving themselves up to the most unbridled licentiousness, wantonly burnt and otherwise destroyed every town and village they entered. The barbarities which they committed on the inhabitants were horrible in the extreme. Aged men and women were often tied together in pairs, and then together cut in halves. Pregnant women were frequently ripped open, and their unborn babes wantonly thrown into the air, accompanied by shouts of triumph from the inhuman soldiery. Infants sucking at the breast were torn from the arms of their distracted mothers, and their brains dashed out on the ground. Other cruelties at which we shudder, and wonder how they could ever enter the mind of man to invent, were exercised on the miserable inhabitants of this wretched country.

A. D. 916.
Haican
era 365.

The motives which impelled Iussuf to countenance these barbarities were of a religious nature: for he was inspired with a desire of compelling the Armenians to renounce Christianity. In consequence of the courage with which they resisted all his attempts to shake their faith, and the fortitude with which they endured death in

defending it, a feast was appointed to be held in commemoration of them, on the 20th Marerey (May), or on the 3d of June according to the daily church readings. Three martyrs of this period are particularly mentioned in the old records, one named Michael, a youth of seventeen years of age, from the country of Gugars, and the other two, David and Gurghen, brothers of the race of Gnunians, the whole three remarkable for their beauty and the fine proportion of their persons.

A. D. 917.
Haican
era 366.

During the time of this havock and desolation, the neighbouring nations made inroads into Armenia, destroying all the frontier provinces. The chiefs, instead of uniting against the common enemies, still continued engaged in their feuds, and what was left untouched by Iussuf and the other invaders, they brought to ruin.

A. D. 918.
Haican
era 367.

In the mean time agriculture was quite abandoned, and the land remained untilled, the consequence of which was a sore and dreadful famine. Every one sought to make a prey of his neighbour, and the want of food was experienced to that degree, that villages, towns and cities were attacked merely for the purpose of devouring the slain. Notwithstanding this, hundreds died of absolute starvation, and it is even related that some individuals were actually eaten up alive by others who were driven to this madness by excess of hunger.

The emperor Constantine Biphyrogenitus having heard of these dreadful events, directed the Greek patriarch Nicholas to write to the Armenian pontiff Johannes, who had taken up his residence in the country of the Georgians, also to king Atirnerseh, and to Gurghen prince of the Aphlazes, to request that they would unite their efforts to bring the Armenian and Aluan chiefs to a state of peace with each other, in order to the restoration of order in their country. . He also directed the patriarch to assure them of his protection and desire to cooperate with them in any measures that could be adopted to remove the horrors which then pervaded Armenia. Johannes being unable to effect any thing toward the amelioration of the condition of the country, unassisted by other means, wrote to the emperor Constantine and his colleague Romanus, in the month of November, A. D. 920, H. E. 369, in the name of his countrymen, and after relating all the calamities which they had suffered and were still suffering, besought that they would aid them; and on his own part requested they would assign him a secure retreat in Greece, by which he evinced that he perfectly agreed with them in regard to religious matters. Constantine, upon the receipt of this letter, sent a prince of the name of Theodorus Basili-

A. D. 919.
Haican
era 368.

A. D. 920.
Haican
era 369.

cus into Armenia, bearing an invitation to the pontiff and Ashot the king to visit Constantinople, for the purpose of conferring on the best means of restoring order in their country. Something prevented Johannes from accepting this invitation, for he was obliged to proceed shortly afterwards to the province of Derjan in Upper Armenia, which was at that time under the dominion of the Greeks.

A. D. 921.
Haican
era 370.

Ashot, however, accompanied Theodorus to Constantinople, where he was received by the emperor with all the honour and respect due to a king. The chiefs who were in his suite, were also honoured according to the rank they held in Armenia. After remaining here a short time, Ashot was furnished with a body of Greek troops, and he forthwith returned to Armenia. In all the places through which he passed he was hailed with acclamations of joy. One city alone, Colb, showed hostility, but was speedily taken and delivered up to the spoliation of the soldiers. Colb originally belonged to Ashot the general and cousin of the king, who, it will be recollected, was then a captive with Iussuf in Atropatia. The inhabitants of this city, on its being taken by the king, escaped to other villages and towns which owned the jurisdiction of the captive general, and endeavoured to make head against the Grecian

troops. They were, however, speedily dispossessed of all their places of shelter, and their property confiscated. After these little disturbances were quieted, Ashot dismissed his Greek auxiliaries, and fixed the seat of his government at Erazgavors, where he was shortly after joined by his brother Abas, who had heretofore found a retreat in Georgia. In the mean time Iussuf, who had all along kept a watchful eye on the affairs of Armenia, finding that Ashot had succeeded in fixing himself on the throne by the aid of the emperor, produced a pretender to the crown in the person of Ashot the general, whom he released and caused to be proclaimed king. By this measure he hoped again to produce dissension and trouble amongst the Armenians. The general on his arrival in Armenia discovering the manner in which the city of Colb and his other possessions had been treated by the king, became highly incensed, and forthwith declared war against him. Here again the kingdom was divided into two factions, and all the horrors of civil war broke out. After many encounters, with various fortune on both sides, the king and his relation the general were at length reconciled by the interference of Jöhannes the pontiff. During the time of this civil war, Vasak the Gunthunian, chief of the Gugars,

seeing the division that reigned in the kingdom, declared himself independent. On the termination of the difference between Ashot and his cousin, the former, accompanied by his brother Abas, advanced against the rebel. Vasak, terrified at their approach, shut himself up in the fortress of Shamshuldey. The king on his arrival found this place so strong that he could not hope to take it. He therefore spread his troops in small parties over the province, for the purpose of better providing themselves with provisions, and accompanied by 250 men, proceeded to the fortress of Askureth where he halted.

Vasak, having due information of all this, with great haste and secrecy collected a body of 4,000 men from Tiflis and the country about Mount Caucasus and suddenly laid siege to Askureth. Ashot was amazed at this unexpected event, yet determined to make a bold attempt to rescue himself from the danger that environed him. Having assembled his small party, he exhorted them to place their trust in God and his Son the Blessed Saviour, and then courageously led them on to attack the besiegers. Their assault was so sudden and vigorous that Vasak's troops were thrown into confusion and made very little resistance.

The king's followers made a dreadful slaugh-

ter, and those who survived had no other alternative than to throw down their arms and surrender: one half of these prisoners being infidels, Ashot caused their noses and ears to be cut off. The Christians were stripped and then released. As for Vasak, who also fell into the king's hands, he besought forgiveness with such humility and promises of better behaviour for the future, that Ashot was prevailed upon to release and re-establish him in his office of chief of the Gugars. The king then proceeded on a visit to Gurghen, prince of Aphlazes, with whom he remained during the winter. Immediately after the king had set out on his expedition against the Gugars, the general Ashot revoked his agreement to a reconciliation with his cousin, and forthwith took possession of all the towns and villages round the city of Valarshapat. He then raised an immense number of troops, and encamping near the village of Valaver awaited the king's return. News of these circumstances being conveyed to Ashot, he with the greatest diligence marched into Armenia, and coming unexpectedly at break of day, on the camp of the rebel general, attacked it with such spirit and vigour, that after a short resistance all therein took to flight, accompanied by their leader, who, unprovided against such a sudden

A. D. 922.
Haican
era 371.

assault, with difficulty made his escape in a half naked state. The victors got an immense booty in the camp of the rebels. Ashot immediately afterward proceeded to Valarshapat. The rebel general took refuge in the city of Duin. Johannes the pontiff shortly afterwards again effected a reconciliation between them. About this period the king married Sevada the daughter of Isaac prince of the Gardmans. On this occasion Iussuf, who meditated a revolt from the caliph, and wished to obtain the assistance of Ashot in his projects, sought to conciliate his good opinion by sending him a splendid crown and magnificent royal robes, with a body of cavalry to be kept by him as his own troops. The king in return for these princely presents, sent Iussuf gifts of immense value. Ashot the general, restless, envious and discontented, again broke out into rebellion against the king; who, on the first news of it, assembled a large force consisting of his own troops, others furnished by his father-in-law, and the cavalry lately sent him by Iussuf, and proceeded against the rebel who was shut up in the city of Duin. On his arrival there he was met by Johannes the pontiff, who entreated him to suspend his operations against the city, promising to induce the general to return to obedience. But the king would not listen to him,

and immediately ordered his troops to advance to the assault. The citizens of Duin repulsed them with great slaughter, and making a sally upon the besiegers on their retiring from this attack, completely defeated them. Johannes then again offered his intercession, which being accepted, peace was once more restored between them.

CHAPTER V.

The reign of Ashot the Second continued.

ASHOT some time after his succession to the sovereignty of Armenia, appointed a warlike and able man named Moses to govern the country of Uti. This individual, who was not entirely free from ambition, having observed the continual wars between the king and his rebellious cousin, assumed an independent power in Uti, and induced the inhabitants to follow his standard in invading Armenia. On the settling of the dispute with the general at the city of Duin, Ashot, accompanied by Isaac his father-in-law and the troops which had been employed against the late rebels, advanced to quell the revolt of the inhabitants of Uti.

A. D. 923.
Haican
era 371.

Moses did not shun the encounter, but boldly pushed forward to meet him. Ashot first tried by mild measures to reduce him to obedience, and sent him messengers to propose terms. Moses rejected them with scorn, and sent back the messengers with disgrace. Ashot and his father-in-law then dividing their forces into two detachments made a rapid march and came upon Moses by surprise in the night. The assault being given, the rebel troops were struck with consternation, and after making very little resistance took to flight. Their leader with difficulty made his escape to the country of the Sisakans, from which he soon after departed and went to the country of the Zanars, where he succeeded in procuring a large body of fierce troops, with which he again made head against the king. Ashot, however, with that promptitude which characterized all his enterprizes, hastened forward to meet Moses and his new adherents. A battle ensued, in which the king having singled out the rebel chief from the midst of his troops, rushed impetuously upon him, and with a blow of his sabre clove his iron helmet and inflicted a deep wound on his head. He then dealt about his blows indiscriminately among the surrounding foes, and by his undaunted bravery so terrified them that they all sought safety in flight. In the

mean time Moses lay on the ground insensible, from the severe wound he had received, and after the flight of his followers was seized by Ashot and brought to the Armenian camp. Here he was severely punished for his rebellion, the king causing his eyes to be burnt out with a hot iron. Ashot then restored order amongst the people of Uti, appointing as governor over them an individual of the name of Amram, who in consequence of his gigantic strength was surnamed Zilik or the little bull. The king after quelling this disturbance returned to the province of Shirak.

While Ashot was engaged in the expedition against Moses, his brother Abas, whom he had appointed prince of princes, conspired with his father-in-law Gurghen the prince of Aphlazes, to take away his life. On the king's return from Shirak to Erazgavors his capital, they hired a band of ruffians, and proceeded with them to that city for the purpose of perpetrating the dark deed they meditated. Ashot on their arrival received information of their intentions, and having no means of defeating their designs by opposing them, secretly withdrew with his family and the son of his unnatural brother Abas, to the country of Uti. Here he collected a large army, consisting of the inhabitants of Uti and Gugars, with some

auxiliaries from the adjacent nations, and marched at their head to Aphlazes the country of Gurghen, which he ravaged and almost ruined. In the mean time the two conspirators, Abas and Gurghen, not being aware of the flight of the king, proceeded with their ruffians to the palace, and finding that the object they sought had fled, they were seized with shame and fury. They plundered all the property belonging to the king that they could find in the city, and then proceeded to ravage the country like public robbers. When Ashot appeared against them with his troops, they boldly offered battle, but were worsted. Several fights subsequently took place between the two parties, but the king was always victorious, though not able entirely to subdue the rebels. In the end they were reconciled with each other, through the mediation of Vasak the Seunian. Some time afterwards Ashot detected this same Vasak in an act of treachery against him, and immediately caused him to be seized, put in chains, and strictly confined in the fortress of Kayen.

When Isaac the father-in-law of the king heard of the imprisonment of Vasak, he became highly incensed, because that chief was one of his most particular friends; from this circumstance enmity broke out between Ashot and

his father-in-law, which was fostered by private slanderers on both sides. It at length rose to such a pitch that both flew to arms and prepared for a deadly contest. The chiefs at this juncture interfered, and produced a reconciliation between them, as between father and son, and caused them to make a covenant of peace solemnly committed to writing on both sides, and sealed by the sign of the holy cross. Having exchanged these papers, each returned in peace to his habitation. Immediately after this event Gurghan prince of Aphlazes, who still cherished a hatred against the king, and regarded Atirnerseh the king of the Georgians with no better feeling, broke out into rebellion and ravaged the lands of both princes. Ashot and Atirnerseh then joined their forces to subdue the rebel, who on his side had not been idle, for he had succeeded in inducing Abas the king's brother, and the old rebel Ashot the general, to join with him to oppose the two monarchs. The opposite armies soon met, and a battle was fought in which victory declared itself for the two kings; the troops of the united rebels being routed with great carnage. The defeated army took refuge in the vallies of Aphlazes, whither they were pursued by the royal forces and dreadfully harrassed by the incessant attacks that were made upon them.

At length the rebels were obliged to sue for pardon, and they promised if Ashot would desist from hostilities they would ever after prove obedient to him, and make good all the losses which they had occasioned to the partizans of the king.

While Ashot was engaged in settling this disturbance, another faction broke out, fomented by his father-in-law Isaac, in whose breast the embers of enmity against the king were still glowing. He secretly gathered a body of 8,000 men, whom he armed in the most perfect manner the times afforded, and advanced at their head into the country of Uti. Here the troops spoiled all they met, reducing the towns and villages to a state of the greatest ruin. Hence they marched into the province of Zoraphor in the country of the Gugars, where was the fortress of Kayen, in which Vasak the Seunian lay confined, with the wives of some rebellious chiefs. This Isaac attacked and captured, when he released Vasak and sent him to his own province. With the remaining captives and the property he found there he departed for other enterprizes, leaving a guard to preserve it in his name. He then advanced against another fort at a short distance from Kayen, which he took and put all the garrison to the sword.

The corn standing in the fields of this province, which at that period was not half ripe, he caused to be reaped, and afterwards finding the uselessness of it wantonly destroyed the whole by fire. With the booty he had made he then retired to the mountainous districts of the Gugars.

Just at this time Ashot was concluding a peace with the rebel Gurghen and his associates, when he received the sad tidings of all that had been done by his father-in-law Isaac. Thunderstruck at the intelligence, he hastily selected 300 of his bravest troops, and accompanied by a bishop and a few priests repaired to the province of Zoraphor. Having obtained information where Isaac and his forces lay he immediately proceeded towards him. Having ascended a hill near which Isaac was encamped, Ashot permitted his troops to take a little rest, and sent forward to the rebel to exhort him to make peace and restore the two castles he had taken, with the spoil he had collected. Isaac detained the bishop, telling him, "I will answer his message in person with my sword!" He then advanced and surrounded the hill on which the king and his few troops had taken post, placing his infantry in the front, and supporting them with his cavalry. The horsemen exhibited the utmost

contempt of the king's forces, advancing to and fro with the most careless indifference, as if they had completely entrapped him. On the rise of the sun, the army of Isaac exhibited a most brilliant spectacle from the beams darting on their polished shields and armour, and reflecting the dazzling light in every direction. Ashot, no way daunted by the formidable array before him, proceeded down the hill accompanied by only 200 of his men, the remaining 100 being completely exhausted by the fatigue they had undergone the preceding day. On advancing towards the enemy Ashot took the paper containing the covenant of peace which Isaac had previously made with him, and sanctified by an oath, and extending it towards heaven, appealed to God for judgment on the perjured. He then tied it to a small crucifix which he always carried with him, and gave the signal for the onset. Mounting their horses, the little band rushed with the most enthusiastic bravery on the rebels, and their exertions were crowned with the most complete success. So great was the carnage amongst the rebels that only two out of the whole escaped with life. These were Isaac and his son Gregory, who were made prisoners, and being brought into the presence of the king, he ordered their eyes to be plucked out, and then let them

go where they chose. Ashot then marched to Gardman, the province of Isaac, and subjugated the whole, thenceforward governing it as one of his own possessions. Shortly after this, the people of Gugars rebelled, but were soon reduced by the active conduct of the king. The whole of the kingdom now being in a state of tranquillity he returned to the city of Duin.

Ashot, however, was condemned to be in incessant action, for in the same year of his return from the conquest of Isaac, Zilik Amram, whom it will be recollected, he had sometime before appointed governor of Uti, revolted and allured the chiefs of that country to espouse his interests. Ashot, previous to receiving an account of this rebellion, had taken a small detachment of troops and set out for Uti on an excursion of pleasure. On the journey news of the change that had taken place in Amram's conduct were communicated to him. Ashot then proceeded to the king of the Egerians, who was in alliance with him, and requested assistance against the rebels. He was immediately furnished by this monarch with all the Egerian cavalry, with which he entered Uti. Here he found Amram encamped in a thick forest near the river Cur, with an immense army. As the position of the enemy's camp was

unfavourable to the proper exercise of Ashot's troops, the latter sought to decoy him from it. For this purpose the king brought his troops into a fortress near at hand, which was providentially unoccupied, the passages to it also being extremely narrow and easy to defend. Here the royal troops took repose.

In the mean time, Amram finding out the place where Ashot and his men lay, advanced with his troops and surrounded it, by which means the people within were unable to procure any kind of provisions, not even water, the fortress being on an acclivity. The troops of Ashot giving way to despair at the contemplation of their gloomy situation, entered into an agreement with the enemy to bind and deliver up their leader, provided they were permitted to leave the country unmolested. Ashot having coming to the knowledge of this became dreadfully alarmed, and in the middle of the night, mounting a very swift horse, got through the narrow passages of the fort, and darting into the midst of the enemy's cavalry, overthrew all who attempted to oppose him, and eventually made his escape. Amram enraged at this unexpected event then entered the fortress, and after plundering those who were within, permitted them to depart to their native country. Ashot, in the mean time first took refuge in the castle

of Cakavacar and from thence sought shelter in the isle of Sevan, having gathered a body of 100 men who accompanied him to this latter place. Ashot was much dejected by the reverse which he had of late experienced, as he had no means of protecting his kingdom from the invasions with which it was threatened. One of his most attached chiefs, named George, of the tribe of Marzpetians, a man of great skill and courage, at the head of twenty men, traversed the country, and endeavoured to recruit the forces of his master, but met with very little success. The greater part of the chiefs, distrustful of each other, remained shut up in their strongholds, and studying their own private interests rather than those of their king or country. About this time Gagik, who had suffered much from the tyranny of Iussuf and Espuk the chief, assumed an independent power over the country of Vaspurakøn. He also built a splendid city in the island of Akhthamar situated in the sea of Buznunia, and erected in it a magnificent church dedicated to the holy cross.

CHAPTER VI.

*Continuation of the reign of Ashot the Second,
and the pontificates of Stephen the Second and
Theodorus the First.*

A. D. 923.
Haican
era 372. WHEN Iussuf learned that Ashot had retired to the isle of Sevan, he sent into Armenia a chief of the name of Nusir, with directions to take immediate steps for the reduction of the whole nation and the capture of the person of the king. Nusir first arrived in Nakhjuan where he abode for a few days, during which, Babken the Sisakan came to him with a complaint against his brother Isaac, accusing him of having deprived him of his paternal inheritance. Nusir promised him redress, but directed him to wait awhile till the accused should come to him. Isaac however not coming as speedily as Nusir wished, the latter wrote to him inviting him to come to Nakhjuan. Isaac, not aware that his brother had made an accusation against him, accepted Nusir's invitation, and forthwith repaired to him with presents. On his arrival Nusir desired both brothers to accompany him to Duin, where he would

attend to their affairs. In his progress to this city he passed by the village of Carunj, where he was welcomed by the principal inhabitants. Nusir, quite unmoved at their demonstrations of respect, seized them and took them in chains to Duin. On his arrival at this city, he took the litigious Babken and his brother Isaac, and loading them with chains, threw them into prison, together with those he had taken at Carunj. He also meditated the seizure of the pontiff Johannes, but the latter, apprehensive of his safety, and warned by the phenomenon of the sun becoming suddenly and unaccountably darkened, on the second day of Nusir's arrival in Duin, and when he was aware there could be no eclipse, retired to the fortress of Beurakan, which was his own private property, and in which he had built a convent and a church. From this retreat Johannes wrote to Nusir supplicating him to permit him to reside in Duin without fear of molestation. Nusir consented, and even gave the pontiff an oath that he should be in safety. Some of the Saracens in the train of Nusir having represented to him that it was an unlawful act to give an oath to a Christian, he hastened to send a detachment of troops to seize the pontiff, fancying that the latter had addressed him from the convent of Ayrs. On the arrival of the soldiers at this

place they discovered that Johannes was not there; and being irritated by disappointment, and inspired by cupidity, they plundered both the church and convent. Not satisfied with this, they tortured the priests whom they found there, in order to discover if any treasure lay concealed. Having taken all that was possible for them to obtain, they left their unfortunate victims and returned to Nusir. The poor priests who had been tortured died a very short time afterwards, through the effects of their previous sufferings.

Nusir then sent forces against the fortress of Beurakan, but Johannes escaped from thence and retired to the city of Bagaran, which was then under the government of Ashot the rebel general, of whom we formerly related so much.

The troops of Nusir in the mean time prosecuted the siege of Beurakan. They assaulted it several times, but were always repulsed with great slaughter. They at length obtained possession of it by means of a traitor belonging to the garrison, who betrayed it to them. They put numbers of the inhabitants to the sword, and martyred many of the women whom they found therein. The wretch who was the cause of its capture received the due reward of his treason, being put to death by order of Nusir.

Some time after this, Nusir was recalled by Iussuf, and on his departure from Armenia he left an individual of the name of Bishr in his room. Bishr having received intelligence of the situation of king Ashot in the island of Sevan, selected from his army 1,000 powerful men, whom he armed as cavalry; and at their head pushed forward to attempt the capture of the island and king. He desolated all the country over which he passed. At some distance from the city, George the Marzpetian, of whom we before made some mention, at the head of twenty men fell in with Bishr's forces, and alarmed at their superiority of number, hastily retired into a secret place. Having conferred with his men, and finding all inspired with an equal abhorrence of the enemy, and devotion to their king and country, George determined, notwithstanding the few men he had with him, to attack the spoilers, confiding in God. Filled with enthusiasm in the cause in which they were engaged, the little band advanced to meet the 1,000 men whom Bishr had with him, and rushing to the assault with as much skill as courage, completely defeated them. A great number of the enemy was slain and the remainder fled. Out of the little party by which this gallant act was achieved only three fell, who were

subsequently buried with every demonstration of sorrow and respect which their conduct deserved. Having gathered the spoil from the slain, George and his men retired to one of their fastnesses, and having taken a little repose, recommenced their labours of protecting the country against those who sought to despoil it. Bishr exasperated at the disgraceful defeat he had lately suffered, assembled an immense force, and went in pursuit of George the Marzpetian. Not being able to discover the retreat of this individual, he marched toward the island of Sevan to endeavour to take the king who had retired thither.

On his arrival at the shore of the sea in which the island is situated he pitched his camp in view of it.

The brave Ashot was not daunted by such a sight, for he knew the quality of the men in his adversary's army. He forthwith prepared ten vessels, in each of which he placed seven archers, all so extremely skilful with the bow, that the smallest object at which they aimed their arrows was never missed. These vessels were directed to anchor along shore and abreast of Bishr's army, and gall them with continual discharges of arrows. On the approach of these vessels Bishr was astonished at the daring nature of their expedition, fancying

they would proceed to land troops to attack him. However, when they commenced shooting their arrows, his astonishment gave way to the most violent rage, for each arrow was guided with such precision that it never missed killing or wounding the object against whom it was aimed. Terror seized upon the soldiery, on their observing the skill of these redoubted archers, and at length, seeing that each moment added to their loss by the fall of their comrades, from the incessant discharges that took place, they all fled. This was a glorious feat, and the victors, on the retreat of Bishr and his troops, landed and found immense booty in their camp.

Bishr enraged at this failure of his expedition, marched against the fortress of Kelah, on which he determined to wreak his vengeance. Defeats however are like the visitations of domestic afflictions; one quickly follows another, and here Bishr met with a severer defeat than he had hitherto suffered. On the very day he laid siege to Kelah, and a few hours previous to his appearance there, George the Marzpetian with his seventeen followers, by some fortunate accident had marched into it. As soon as the besiegers commenced operations against the fortress, George with his men sallied out, and made a gallant charge upon them, marking their progress by heaps of slain. George

distinguished himself by a furious attack on Bishr, the legs of whose horse being broken by the violence of the charge, fell with his rider to the ground. By the assistance of his guards Bishr got another horse, and with difficulty made his escape, followed by all the surviving soldiers of his army. The victors obtained a great quantity of spoil from the plunder of the camp of the vanquished, and the bodies of their slain. George's followers were so much reduced by these repeated actions, that from this period they were obliged to discontinue their praiseworthy labours. In the mean time the garrison of the fortress of Kelah, observing that George had disbanded his followers, and being themselves apprehensive of the future operations of Bishr, took their effects with them and evacuated it. Bishr on hearing of this marched with his troops and took possession of Kelah and several other fortresses similarly abandoned, and assumed the government of the towns and villages dependent on them.

Nusir shortly after these events returned from Atropatia, and took up his residence in the city of Duin. He transformed the pontifical palace into a dwelling house for his servants, but pitying the condition to which the Armenians were reduced, he desisted from persecuting them as heretofore, contenting him-

self with the tribute which they were accustomed to pay to the Caliph.

Johannes the pontiff, on observing the degrading purposes to which Nusir had applied his palace, retired to Vaspurakan, where as we have before remarked, Gagik reigned independent. After a little rest here the pontiff set about carrying on a history of the events of Armenia, which he had previously commenced. Having finished it, he shortly after died; having presided over the church twenty-seven years and eight months. During his pontificate Thomas the Arzrunian flourished, the author of many valuable works, amongst which are memoirs of the Arzrunians, and a full account of the cruelties of Bulah and other interesting subjects.

A. D. 924.
Haican
era 373.

Stephen the Second, from the island of Akhthamar, succeeded Johannes in the pontifical chair, but died in the course of a year after his election. Theodorus the First, a native of the same island as Stephen, then became pontiff. In the first year of the pontificate of Theodorus, Gagik of Vaspurakan, wrote to Tryphon the patriarch of the Greeks, and to the emperor Romanus, begging that steps might be taken to bring about an unanimity of religious opinions between the Greeks and Armenians. Neither the patriarch nor

A. D. 926.
Haican
era 375.

the emperor answered his appeal to them; for they were aware from past experience that if they succeeded in bringing about what Gagik wished, it would not last long. Gagik was much grieved at their silence, but from that time only occupied himself in securing the tranquillity of his country.

A. D. 927.
Haican
era 376. Ashot the king observing the peace the nation enjoyed under the government of the Caliph's delegate Nusir, became happy and content. Shortly after, being reconciled with his brother Abas, he died; although in the bloom of his age. His reign lasted, from the martyrdom of his father Sumbat to his own death, fourteen years and a half. He enjoyed the high title of Shahinshah, or king of kings.

CHAPTER VII.

The reign of Abas, and the pontificates of Elishey the First and Ananias Mockazie.

A. D. 928.
Haican
era 377. ON the death of his brother Ashot Ercath, Abas succeeded to the throne of Armenia, with the consent of all the chiefs, and of Gagik, who had assumed the title of king of Vaspurakan. Abas fixed the seat of his government at Cars or Ghars in Little Vanand; and shortly after

his elevation made a tour through the whole of his dominions, and with the assistance of the renowned George Marzpetian, cleared the country of all the hordes of depredators which had hitherto infested it. The kingdom now assumed a new aspect, every thing appearing to enjoy rest and peace.

Abas then proceeded to Duin, where he testified so much respect for the governor Nusir, and displayed such engaging manners, that the latter shewed him great kindness and regard: Nusir, on the king's account, caused the Sisakan princes, Babken and Isaac, to be released, and restored the pontifical palace. The latter, however, henceforward was never used for the residence of the pontiff. In the course of a short time the self-exiled Armenians, both clergy and laity, having heard of the state of order that again reigned in their country, returned to their native places. Many of the clergy who at this time came back to Armenia, had for a long period lived retired in the country of the Egerians. One of these individuals, Johannes an abbot, built the great convent of Camurjazor, in the province of the Arsharunians, celebrated for containing a crucifix which had the power of working miracles. On the death of Johannes, Polycarpus became abbot of this celebrated convent, and on the decease of the

A. D. 929.
Haican
era 378.

A. D. 932.
Haican
era 381.