

HISTORY OF ARMENIA

BY

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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.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

CALCUTTA:

PRINTED AT BISHOP'S COLLEGE PRESS, BY H. TOWNSEND.

1827.

CHAPTER XXI.

The abandonment and captivity of Arsaces; and the almost total destruction of the kingdom of Armenia by the treachery of Merujan.

A. D. 379. SHAPUH, at this time, encouraged by the recent events in Armenia, and perhaps secretly instigated by the chiefs of that country, sent a large army against Arsaces, headed by a Pahlavie of great skill and courage, named Alanozan.

The Armenian monarch, without allies, and hated by his chiefs, saw that he had no other means of safety than flight. He retired therefore to a fortress on a hill, where his enemies could not approach him. The Armenian chiefs, on the first appearance of the invaders, joined their ranks; and on the flight of the king, pursued him to the spot in which he had taken refuge, blocking up every pass by which he could have escaped. Arsaces, observing this, became dreadfully agitated, and sent a secret message to Alanozan the Persian general, saying, "art thou not of the same tribe as myself, a Pahlavie? Thou brave Arsacian! Why dost thou thus hem me about to take me prisoner? Give me but the means of passing into Greece, and behold I resign to thee the crown and sceptre of Armenia!" Alanozan paying no attention to this, Arsaces came to the determination of delivering himself up to him, with the ultimate view of going to Shapuh. He obliged, however, the Pahlavie first to swear that he would commit no violence on him. This being done, Arsaces went over to the camp of his enemies, and surrendered himself. Many of the chiefs, on beholding the fallen condition of their monarch, could not help commiserating him. Some of them determined to accompany him to Shapuh, among whom were Vasak the Mamiconian, and

Dirastamatin, the steward of the royal household. With the whole of these Alanozan returned to Persia. On their arrival, Shapuh directed every possible honour and respect to be paid to them, and appointed them a palace for their residence. The Persian monarch then obliged Arsaces to write to Pharanzem, his queen, to join him in Persia. He also sent a detachment of troops to Armenia, with an order to the chiefs and nobles, directing them to proceed with their queen to the Persian capital. The chiefs were much alarmed at this unexpected command, and sent to Shapuh begging that they might be permitted to remain in their own country. Shapuh remaining inflexible, they became exasperated, and furiously attacking the troops he had sent for their escort, put them to flight. They then quitted Armenia, and retired into different countries. One of them, Varazdat, an Arsacian, went to Constantinople; and was appointed to a situation in the imperial palace. Queen Pharanzem also, having collected immense treasures from the royal palaces, retired in company with Mushel, a Mamiconian, to the strong fortress of Artagers, in Araxazor, which had been recently repaired and strengthened by Arsaces. From this retreat she wrote to prince Pap, then, it will be remembered, a hostage at Constantinople, and urged him to en-

deavour, by means of Nierses and the Greek chiefs, to obtain the restoration of the almost ruined kingdom of his father. "If this be hopeless," says she, "at least do something to endeavour to save me from falling into the hands of Shapuh." When the Persian monarch came to the knowledge of these events, he was extremely angry, and forthwith caused Arsaces to be seized, loaded with chains, and transported to Khujastan, and there placed in the castle of Oblivion; so called because all who were once placed there were never more heard of. Their names even were forbidden to be mentioned, on pain of partaking of their fate. Shapuh, after this, sent another army into Armenia, headed by the two apostates, Merujan the Arzrunian, and Vahan the Mamiconian, of whom we before made some mention. On their entering the country, they found it in a most deplorable state of anarchy. The laws were not regarded, neither was there any kind of authority acknowledged. They proceeded on to the castle of Artagers, where queen Pharanzem had sought protection, and laid siege to it: but after several attacks, they found it was impregnable by arms: they therefore turned the siege into a blockade. The inhabitants, at length, finding that there was no prospect of relief from Pap, to whom the queen had written, opened the gates, and

A. D. 380.

surrendered. Every thing in the castle was given up to spoil and plunder. The inhabitants, with Pharanzem the queen, were taken into Assyria, and there, by various species of torture, compelled to abjure their faith. Some were picketed on the sharpened pegs of waggons, and thus forced to forsake a religion they venerated, and adopt one they abhorred. Those whose firmness was proof against all the wicked ingenuity of their tormentors, expired under torture; thus sealing with their blood the testimony of their attachment to christianity. Mushel escaped to Constantinople, and there related all these horrors to Nierves. Merujan and Vahan returned from Assyria again into Armenia, like two fiends, spreading destruction wherever they came. All the Jews residing in the kingdom were conveyed by them into Persia. Arsaces, finding himself in inextricable bondage, and informed of the dreadful events that had lately occurred in Armenia, was driven to despair, and seizing a sword, which the carelessness of his guards had permitted him to have, he plunged it into his breast and expired. His reign lasted eighteen years, or, according to other computations, thirty years, including the period of his exile.

Arsaces was a monarch of vitiated principles, and the sole cause of all the misery that visited

his kingdom. He was cruel, treacherous, and tyrannical; implacable in his resentment, a stranger to every virtue that can render power amiable, and devoid of every feeling that ennobles humanity.

Shapuh, some short time after, assembled a large army, and placed it under the command of Merujan the apostate, directing him to enter Armenia again, and promising him the sovereignty of it, if he succeeded in subduing the chiefs, and prevailing on the inhabitants to embrace the religion of the Persians. To assist him, in attaining this latter object, he sent with the army a number of Magi, the ministers of the Persian religion. Merujan accepted the terms, and forthwith set forward on his expedition. He entered Armenia like a raging and hungry wolf, and seizing the wives and relations of the self-exiled chiefs, he confined them in castles; in the hopes that their husbands would be induced again to come to their native country to sue for their release. He then seized the bishops and priests, and sent them all to Persia and Assyria, where many of them perished by various tortures in defence of their religion. The remainder of the christian ministers were kept in close confinement. All the books which he found in the country, written in the Greek character, he caused to be burnt; and

issued an order that no Armenian should learn that language. The inhabitants were only permitted to use the Persian characters in their writings. We before observed that all the books in the Armenian language were written in the Greek and Syriac characters, the Armenians having no alphabet of their own. The Syriac was used in religious writings, the Greek in scientific works, and the Persian, at this period, began to be employed in the forms and statutes of law. The Magi, accompanied by executioners, were distributed amongst the towns and villages of the kingdom, where they forced the inhabitants to forsake their religion, giving them the only alternative of instant death. The dreadful news of these enormities reaching Constantinople, St. Nierses, and all the Armenians who were about him, were plunged into the deepest sorrow : many of the chiefs who had left the country at the commencement of the persecution, came into Greece, and were well received by their christian brethren in that country. The blessed St. Nierses, after praying fervently for his persecuted country, went to Theodosius the emperor, and earnestly besought him to appoint Pap, the son of Arsaces, king of Armenia ; and send him, with the remainder of the Armenian hostages at Constantinople, and a suitable force to

take possession of Armenia, by which he would prevent the further effusion of christian blood in that unhappy country. He solemnly entreated him to grant his request, if not for the sake of expelling the old enemies of the empire, the Persians, at least for the sake of preserving the christian religion from the violence which was then daily offered to it.

Theodosius, unable to withstand the supplications of the saint, invested Pap with the ensigns of royalty. He then ordered his general Terentius to collect, with all practicable speed, a large army, and march with it to Armenia, to put the prince in possession of his lawful inheritance. The emperor retained Zarmandught, the wife of Pap, with her two sons Arsaces and Valarsaces as hostages for her husband's allegiance. The Armenian chiefs, who had, until this period, avoided disputing the power of Shapuh, now joined Pap. Spandarad, the Camsaracan, the individual who had escaped the slaughter of his tribe, as related above, and Sumbat, the son of Bagarat the Bagratian chief, were amongst those who united themselves to his forces. All now prepared for the expedition into Armenia.

CHAPTER XXII.

The reign of Pap and the pontificate of Shahak.

A. D. 381. PAP, the son of Arsaces the Second, being appointed king of Armenia by the emperor Theodosius, marched to that country, accompanied by a large body of Greek troops, commanded by Terentius. Merujan, having heard of the approach of the king, fled into Persia, after leaving orders with the governors of the castles in which the wives of the chiefs were confined, to hang their prisoners upon the battlements, in derision of their husbands. He also forbade the removal of their bodies, but directed that they should remain there until they were devoured by the birds of the air, or become so putrid as to fall to pieces. The chiefs perceiving this, first attacked these castles, and having reduced them, put the garrisons to the sword, when they took the corpses of the women and gave them christian burial. There were a few individuals who had been kept in irons, and who had escaped the fate of the women: these were released and sent to their native places. Some time previous to the departure of Merujan from Armenia, he dispatched letters to Shapuh, who

was then in the province of Khorasan, to acquaint him with the appointment of Pap to the crown of Armenia by the emperor Theodosius, and of the arrival in that country of the Grecian force which the latter had sent with the young prince to secure the throne. Shortly after, he again wrote to the Persian king, informing him that the Grecian general had entirely expelled the Persians from Armenia. On the receipt of this last communication, Shapuh became exceedingly angry, and dispatched a messenger to his son Artashir, directing him to assemble, without delay, the whole force of Persia, together with troops from the Ghecs, Aluans, and all the other nations that acknowledged his sway. These were all placed under the command of Merujan, whom the Persian monarch ordered to advance with the greatest expedition, and give battle to the Greek and Armenian forces. When Pap and Terentius heard this, they applied to the emperor for more troops. Theodosius immediately issued orders to Addeus, one of his principal officers, to collect all the power of Greece, with the various engines of war then in use, and march to the assistance of Pap. This was quickly done, and a junction being formed between Terentius and Addeus, the whole body marched to the neighbourhood of Mount Nepat, and encamped on an extensive plain. The Persians advanced to this place, and

pitched their tents exactly opposite to those of the combined armies. Terentius had previously directed Georgianus, who commanded the infantry to form a bulwark round the Grecian and Armenian camp with the shields of his men. This being done, he posted his troops in the best way possible to prevent a surprise ; the bucklers on all sides presenting a formidable rampart. The allied troops made a splendid show, from the profusion of gold and silver ornaments with which they and their horses were decorated. The armour of the Grecian soldiers was of leather, with gold embroidery, and so tough as to be impenetrable to arrow or lance.

The appearance of the Persian army was no less splendid. The armour used by that nation was of brass and iron. The Ghecs and Aluans, headed by their respective kings, and clad in their peculiar war-costume, rendered the whole a very imposing spectacle. The hostile armies regarded each other with feelings of the greatest rage, hardly able to repress their desire for an immediate attack. At sun-rise, on the day after the Persians came in sight of the Armenian and Grecian forces, the commanders of the respective armies marshalled their men in order of battle. The enemy were astonished at the brilliant reflection from the shields and embroidered armour of the Greek troops, caused by the latter being to the westward

of their opponents. This, however, was a disadvantage, for the sun, darting his rays in the faces of the combined Armenian and Greek troops, dazzled them, so that they could not see distinctly. Saint Nierses, who had accompanied his countrymen, now ascended to the top of Mount Napat, and falling on his knees, lifted up his hands, and prayed that victory might attend the followers of the cross.

This was agreed upon as the signal for the Greeks and Armenians to charge. The two armies were quickly engaged, and in their meeting seemed like two mountains of equal bulk striving against each other : the war-cries of the combatants, and the clash of their weapons and armour rent the sky. At this moment the favour of the Almighty was manifested in an extraordinary way : the Armenians and Greeks were much incommoded by the sun, which beamed fiercely upon them, when on a sudden a thick cloud intervened and quite obscured his rays. A strong wind then arose, which blew with such force against the Persians, that their arrows were driven back against themselves ; the favoured army now rushed to the conflict with redoubled confidence, and were met with equal courage. The Persians fought most undauntedly, and for some time there was no perceptible advantage obtained by either side.

The noise and uproar increased, and torrents of blood deluged the field. The favourable wind, we mentioned before, still continued to blow with increased violence, animating the one side by the certainty of divine aid, and throwing confusion into the ranks of the other. Shergir, king of the Ghecs, a very powerful man, at the head of his troops, fought bravely for some time on the spot where he had first taken up his ground, animating his men by voice and gesture: having succeeded in repulsing the Armenians opposed to him, he advanced, surrounded by his troops, and encircled by their shields. At this moment the Camsaraean Spandarath charged this division of the Persian army, and breaking through the thick array of arms and men, came up to Shergir, and with a blow of his sword brought him to the ground. He then turned on the troops of the fallen king, and put the whole of them to flight. They were encountered in their retreat by the Greeks, and almost all killed. Mushel, the Mamiconian, performed many gallant exploits in this battle; he attacked and slew Caren, a Persian general of great reputation in arms; and at the head of a body of cavalry charged and dispersed the Aluans, whose king, Jurnoir, was wounded by him, and narrowly escaped becoming his prisoner. Sumbat, an Armenian general, also distinguished himself against

that body of the enemy where Merujan was stationed: he succeeded in turning the left wing of the Persian army, and continued, until the end of the fight, to harrass them without intermission, destroying numbers with his own hand. The Persians at length abandoned the field in the utmost confusion, leaving many thousands of their slain on the field.

In a charge which Sumbat made on the troops, about the person of the apostate Merujan, the horse of the latter was wounded, so that the miscreant was unable to quit the field with the same speed as the rest of the fugitives. Sumbat, observing this, pursued him with the utmost ardour, and overtook him at the edge of the thickets of Cagaiovit. The gallant general charged the apostate's followers, and after a severe conflict succeeded in taking him prisoner. He tied his hands behind him, and at first intended to carry him to the allied camp, but reflecting that St. Nierses, who was there, might probably set him at liberty, he changed his design. Looking around, he observed at a short distance the tents of the inhabitants of Cagaiovit, and a large fire near them. He approached the spot, and found a great number of people gathered around this fire, before which was a spit on which they had placed some meat to be dressed. Sumbat took the meat from the

spit, and bending the latter into something like a crown in shape, put it into the fire to heat, and thus addressed the apostate, "You aspired to a crown, Merujan, with the desire of possessing that of Armenia. Now you are aware, that I, as a Bagratian noble, enjoy an hereditary right of performing the act of coronation of the Armenian monarchs. I feel it then a duty incumbent on me, to crown you at this moment king of Armenia!" The crown formed of the spit being now red hot, he took it with a pair of tongs from the fire, and placed it upon the detested head of the abominable apostate. Thus perished the wicked Merujan.

A. D. 382. Sumbat returned to the camp of his friends, and further hostilities ceased. Pap was now the undisputed possessor of the throne; and distributed gifts of great value to those who had been instrumental in procuring him the crown. He would not permit Terentius, the Grecian general, to leave Armenia, retaining him near his person and loading him with honour and riches. Addeus, the colleague of Terentius, was sent back to Greece with the troops of the emperor, after receiving rewards suitable to the distinguished services he had performed for the Armenian monarch. Immediately after this, St. Nierses convened an assembly at Valarshapat, composed of all the chiefs and princes of Armenia,

with the bishops, and other dignitaries of the church, where a solemn covenant was made, that every one would henceforward lead a life of righteousness and peace. Pap, however, was one of the first who disregarded the observance of it; he gave himself up to the guidance of his passions, and vice of the worst description in a short time became his reigning principle. Nier-ses beheld the gradual change in the king's habits with the deepest pain, and endeavoured by every gentle means to lead his royal pupil back to the paths of virtue. The mild admonitions of the blessed saint failing to produce the effect he looked for, he assumed a higher tone of reprehension, which was so displeasing to the king, that he caused the pontiff to be secretly put to death by poison, which was effected in the village of Khakh, in the province of Ekeliash. Thus, say the ancient records, was this most brilliant light of the church extinguished, after illuminating the pontifical throne for a period of twenty, or according to others, thirty-four years. Just before his death, the precious saint foretold many important events. He declared that after the lapse of fifty years, the pontificate should never more be possessed by the posterity of St. Gregory, and that, in aftertime, the kingdom should be troubled by the incursions of the tribes of Archers, &c. It is related, that, on this

mournful event, Shalita the Syrian, and Epiphan the Greek, disciples of old St. Daniel, who lived as hermits, the former on a mountain called Lion, the latter on a hill named the throne of Diana, formerly sacred to the heathen Gods, both beheld St. Nierses ascending with glory into heaven, surrounded by a host of angels. The sight afforded them infinite joy; and subsequently meeting, they related to each other an account of their vision. Finding that the time at which they beheld it corresponded to the period of the Saint's decease, they reported the circumstance in all parts of the kingdom. Nierses left one son, named Isaac, hereafter, as we shall see, pontiff, residing at the time of his father's death at Constantinople, where he perfected himself in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and the different sciences. Shahak, of the family of Albianus, the bishop of Harc, born in the city of Manazkert in the province of Apahunies, succeeded Nierses in the pontificate; he was a good man, eminent for every virtue, and well worthy the high office to which he was elected. He was raised to the pontifical dignity through king Pap, who, observing the general mourning throughout the nation on the death of Nierses, procured the nomination of Shahak, on account of the universal reverence and esteem in which he was held.

Pap, after the cruel murder he had perpetrated on the person of the late lamented pontiff, daily degenerated; listening to the suggestions of creatures who were unable to appreciate a good sovereign's worth, he foolishly resolved to rebel against the emperor. Uninterrupted prosperity, as with men in general, made him forget the debt he owed his benefactor. He dismissed Terentius with his troops, and hastened to collect an army in the province of Bagrevand. Terentius, leaving Armenia, dispatched information of the conduct of Pap to Theodosius, who immediately directed him to return and commence hostilities against the ungrateful monarch. The emperor also directed the troops in Cappadocia to join Terentius without delay. While the Armenian forces, assembled by Pap in the province of Bagrevand, were preparing for hostilities, they were suddenly attacked by Terentius, and after a sharp contest, in which a great number of them were slain, completely routed. During the fight, Terentius killed Gnelus, the general of the eastern division of the Armenian army, with a blow of his sword, which clove his scull. This battle was the more decisive as the defeated troops were taken by surprize. Pap, who had imagined that the Grecian general was on his return to Constantinople, having taken no measures to provide for his personal security, in the

event of a failure of his attempt to establish his independence, was taken prisoner by the victorious troops, shortly after the discomfiture of his army. The weak monarch, as abject in adversity as he was inflated in prosperity, implored Terentius in the most humble language, to spare his life. Terentius loaded him with chains and carried him to the emperor. When Theodosius saw Pap, he reproached him for his ingratitude towards himself, his cruelty to that blessed servant of God, Nierses, and his unkindness to Terentius. He then ordered him to be put to death, which was done by the blow of a sabre. Thus perished king Pap, after a short reign of three years, or, according to other accounts, of seven years.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The period between the reigns of Varazdat and Khosrove the Third; and the pontificate of Zaven and Aspurakes.

A. D. 384. VARAZDAT the Arsacian, who, at the time of the flight of the Armenian chiefs from the tyranny of Shapuh, took refuge in Greece; and who, as we have related, was appointed to a situation in the emperor's household, succeeded Pap on the throne of Armenia, by order of Theodosius. He