

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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At the conclusion of this meeting the nuncio went to Jerusalem, and as the pontiff Gregory was under a vow to visit that city, he accompanied him. Another assembly was held here, when a discussion taking place respecting the Armenian religious ceremonies, Gregory distinguished himself by a very able speech with which all present were much pleased. On the pontiff's return to Zovk, the Latins wrote many commendatory letters to the Pope concerning him, and his holiness thereupon sent him a pontifical sceptre and veil, accompanied by a letter full of kindness and high consideration. A reply was returned by Gregorius in which he testified his sense of the honour which had been conferred upon him.

In this year Thorus the king of the Armenians died, after a reign of twenty-three years, leaving no issue. His remains were interred in the convent of Dirazark.

A. D. 1123.
Haican
era 572.

CHAPTER V.

The reign of Leo the First.

ON the decease of Thorus, Leo his brother succeeded him in the government of the Armenians in Cilicia. Immediately after taking possession of his authority, he assembled his forces and besieged and took the city of

A. D. 1123.
Haican
era 572.

Mamestia. He then marched all over his territories, and advanced as far as Tarsus. In the course of this tour he expelled all the marauders who had been induced by the news of the death of the late king to enter Cilicia for the purpose of plunder. Some few places had also been taken by them, which after a little trouble he recovered. The fame of Leo became so great, that he was an object of fear and dread to all the enemies of the Armenians, and the Greeks avoided all dispute with him. On account of his valiant character he was surnamed the New Ajdahak, (meaning the Median king Ahasuerus, of whom mention was made in the sixth chapter of the first part) and no one disputed his title as king of the Armenians.

A. D. 1130.
Haican
era 579.

At the time of the accession of Leo there was a Latin count named Bedewin residing in the city of Antioch, who having heard of the renown of that monarch sought to get him into his power. Fearful of encountering him in fight, he set about the attainment of his object by treachery. For this purpose, after writing to Leo assurances of his high consideration and regard, he invited him to an entertainment; and on the invitation being accepted, the Latin breaking through every law of hospitality and good faith, with the assistance of some of his countrymen perfidiously seized his guest

and confined him in a castle. After an imprisonment of two months Leo obtained his release, by giving Bedewin, the cities of Mamestia and Adana, the castle called the rock of Sarwand, and 60,000 pieces of money, besides leaving in his hands one of his sons as hostage for henceforward taking no hostile steps to revenge himself on the count.

Leo, however, after his release, attacked and recaptured the whole of the places which had been extorted from him, and in revenge annoyed the Latin chief whenever he found an opportunity. The Latins being much molested by him called to their aid Fulk the king of Jerusalem, and hereupon several bloody battles were fought between the two parties. Leo however proving victorious in all his encounters with them, the Latins sought to make peace. By the mediation of Choslin count of Edessa, one of whose relations was Leo's wife, this was effected; the Latin chief restoring the Armenian monarch's son, and entering into engagements never more to molest him.

A. D. 1131.
Haican
era 580.

The emperor Johannes Porphyrogenitus having perceived that Leo had obtained possession of several Greek cities in Isauria, and that he was daily becoming more powerful, declared war against him. To render his defeat impossible, Johannes assembled all the forces of Greece,

A. D. 1137.
Haican
era 586.

to which he added various troops from other nations, and at the head of the vast army which they formed he marched into Cilicia. When Leo perceived this immense body coming against him, he retired with his wife and two of his sons, Reuben and Thorus, into a part of the mountains where the Greeks could not reach him. His two younger sons, Mileh and Stephaney, were at this period with their maternal relations at Edessa. Leo was obliged to retreat before his enemies; for at that time he and his chiefs were at variance. When the emperor heard of the retreat of Leo, he sent a large detachment of his army to pursue him, to prevent his sudden reappearance to attack the Greeks in the event of his obtaining troops. Johannes then, at the head of the remainder advanced against Mamestia, which he captured, as also Tarsus and Adana. After obtaining possession of these places he detached a strong force to lay siege to Anarzaba, a city built on a high hill, strongly fortified, and containing a large population, all of a warlike and undaunted character. On the approach of the Greek troops to this city, the inhabitants armed, and issuing out of the gates, attacked and completely defeated them. The emperor then marched with all his numerous army and besieged it. For thirty-seven days

he continued incessantly engaged against it, but the citizens by means of red hot iron and stones which they successfully hurled on the besiegers, destroyed all their battering engines. This produced a short cessation of hostilities; but the emperor determined not to raise the siege, constructed new machines which he caused to be covered with clay, to prevent their being burnt like the preceding ones. The operations of the besiegers were then recommenced, and in the course of a short time they made a breach. The Greeks stormed, and a dreadful conflict ensued; the Armenians disputing every inch of ground with the most determined bravery; even the women took part in the fray, hurling from the tops of their houses stones, bricks, and furniture, upon the heads of the assailants. Dreadful was the confusion that prevailed. The Greeks, although slain in heaps, still continued to rush in, and the citizens were finally obliged to retire to the citadel. Here they were besieged by the enemy, and finding that their capture was inevitable should they remain much longer there, they boldly issued out, and cutting their way through the besiegers, left the city. The emperor, although he obtained possession of Anarzaba, lost such an immense number of men in the siege that he felt little or no joy at his success. He then

proceeded to besiege the castle of Vahkah, after leaving a garrison of Greek troops in Anarzaba. On his arrival before this castle he sent in a summons to the Armenians to surrender it quietly, but they treated it with contempt. Vahkah was commanded at this time by a chief named Constantine, of the Reubenian race, a man of tremendous bodily strength and great experience in war. This chief having mounted on the battlements of the castle, dared the Greeks to produce a man to contend with him in single fight. Hereupon a Greek named Eustratius offered himself as the champion of his nation. Having armed himself at all points, he cried out to Constantine to descend and meet him in the field, not with words, but with weapons, as one warrior should meet another. Constantine then issued out of the gates of the castle and attacked Eustratius. The conflict was well supported on each side, both displaying the art of perfect swordsmen. Constantine at length received so violent a blow on his shield that it was dashed to pieces, which obliged him to retire within the castle. The siege was then pressed with double vigour, and Vahkah was at length taken; when the emperor seizing Constantine, sent him in chains to Constantinople. On the arrival of the ship in which he was conveyed, at that city, Con-

stantine succeeded in effecting his escape by breaking his fetters and killing the guards who had him in charge. Through the treachery of some Armenians he was some time after retaken by the Greeks, but what was the nature of his subsequent adventures our historians do not state.

In the mean time the troops who were sent in pursuit of Leo, followed him to the mountains where he had taken refuge, and seizing all the passes completely blockaded him. This preventing a supply of food being furnished him, he was reluctantly obliged to surrender himself into their hands, together with his wife and sons. They were all bound and conducted to the emperor, who sent them in chains to a place of secure confinement. He then drove all the Armenian troops from Cilicia, and appointed Greek governors over all the cities he had captured, leaving a force of 12,000 men to protect them in their offices. He forthwith, with the remainder of his army, returned to Constantinople. These events occurred A. D. 1137, H. E. 586, and the fifteenth year of Leo's government.

In the course of a year after his return to Constantinople, the emperor moved to pity by the representations made to him by the friends of the captive Armenian monarch, released him,

A. D. 1138.
Haican
era 587.

his wife, and his sons, but retained them near his person, giving them apartments in the imperial palace, and treating them with honour and respect.

A. D. 1139.
Haican
era 588.

Some time after this, on an occasion when the emperor went to the bath, Leo's son Reuben who accompanied him gave a proof of strength which is almost incredible. He took a large marble cistern which stood in the bath, and which four men could with difficulty move, and bearing it in his hands with all the ease that he would have borne a basin, placed it before the emperor. All who observed this feat of strength, cried out "a second Sampson!" Some envious individuals, however, found means to raise suspicions in the emperor's mind with regard to this extraordinary strength of Reuben, and he directed his eyes to be thrust out, which occasioned his death. The emperor shortly after, entertaining unjust suspicions respecting Leo, caused him and his son Thorus to be fettered and remanded to their former prison.

A. D. 1140.
Haican
era 589.

Here they remained for some time, earnestly supplicating the Almighty to assist them, when one night Thorus had a remarkable dream which he related the next morning to his father. "I thought," said he, "a man of a most glorious appearance entered our prison and presented me with a loaf on which was a fish. You asked me for it, and on my giving it to you, you did

not eat of it!" Leo then exclaimed with joy, "My son, the time will arrive, as the loaf indicates, when thou shalt recover all the country which I have lost; and as the fish represents, thou shalt become powerful at sea. I partook not of the gifts, therefore I shall not see the accomplishment of these things!"

Leo died a year afterward in prison, on which the emperor compassionating Thorus, released him and kept him near his person as before.

A. D. 1141.
Haican
era 590.

CHAPTER VI.

The reign of Thorus the Second.

WHILST Johannes Porphyrogenitus remained in the imperial throne, Thorus resided with him, and by his engaging manners became a great favourite not only with him, but with all who knew him, high and low, chiefs and domestics. He was of a cheerful disposition, and uncommonly handsome person, generous to a fault, and brave even to rashness. On the death of Johannes and the succession of Manuel Comnenus to the imperial throne, which happened about a year after the decease of Leo, Thorus determined to withdraw to Cilicia. He was unable to do this immediately that Manuel Comnenus became emperor, as he had recently married a

A. D. 1142.
Haican
era 591.

Greek lady of vast wealth ; besides, Cilicia was in a dreadful state of confusion, in consequence of the inroads which the enemies of that country were continually making. The year following however, his wife died ; and Thorus gathering all his property secretly quitted Constantinople, and proceeded by water to Antioch disguised as a merchant. From thence he went to Cilicia, and arriving in the mountains of Taurus, disclosed to a priest his name and family, who thereupon took him to his house and there kept him in a state of concealment.

A. D. 1143.
Haican
era 592.

At this period, numbers of Armenians had taken refuge in the mountains of Taurus from the persecution of the Greeks, and ardently longed for an opportunity to break the chains which these usurpers had thrown upon their country. The priest who had given Thorus protection in his house, having assembled the Armenian chiefs who were in that quarter, informed them that the son of Leo was amongst them. They thereupon desired to see him ; and joining with enthusiasm in his desire to drive the Greeks from Cilicia, soon procured him an army of 10,000 men. Thorus at the head of these, attacked the castles of Vahkah and Amuda and captured them. He then proceeded against other places, and the most unbounded success accompanied him. He took successively Amarzaba, Adana, Sis,

Areuzberd and Barzberd, and succeeded in establishing himself in the throne of his ancestors. Shortly after this, Zanghie the chief of Aleppo, attacked and took Edessa from the hands of the Latins. At this period Stephaney and Mileh were in that city, but in the confusion that followed its capture they found means to escape to their brother Thorus, by whom they were appointed to offices of trust under him. On the news of Thorus's success reaching Constantinople the emperor became highly incensed, and raising an immense force, placed it under the command of his cousin Andronicus Cesar, with directions to march into Cilicia and extirpate all the Armenians.

A. D. 1145.
Haican
era 594.

On the arrival of Andronicus and his army at the frontiers of Cilicia, Thorus sent messengers to him, saying, "I will submit to the emperor, if he will rule justly. Why has he sent you with such a multitude of troops against me? If he desires to hold a despotic sway over the country, let him know that free men will never quietly submit their necks to the yoke!" Andronicus treated this message with contempt, replying, "Know that the justice of the emperor is of such a nature that he has ordered me to bind Thorus with chains, as he formerly bound his father!"

A. D. 1146.
Haican
era 595.

Irritated at this answer, Thorus prepared to

receive the invaders. He assembled his troops, and placing the whole of his infantry in ambush in a certain pass by which the Greeks would have to go, he by a circuitous route got in their rear with the whole of his cavalry. The Greek army fell into the snare that was laid for them, and on their arrival at the pass where the Armenians lay in ambush, they were suddenly attacked on all sides. A dreadful slaughter of the invaders followed, and a multitude were made prisoners, among whom were several Greek chiefs, and an Armenian named Basilius who had turned to the faith of the Greeks, and from whom Thorus had before taken the city of Barzberd. Andronicus, who had with difficulty escaped, wrote an account of this affair to the emperor, declaring that the loss of the army was not to be attributed to the want of courage in his soldiers; and basely asserting that Thorus had deceived him by false oaths. In the mean time the Armenians quietly returned off to their habitations with the spoil and captives they had taken.

The emperor much concerned respecting the number of Greek prisoners in the hands of Thorus, sent ambassadors to him to treat for their ransom. On their arrival, Thorus exclaimed with affected astonishment, "What! are my captives so much esteemed by the emperor

that he wishes to ransom and appoint them chiefs of his nation!" He then demanded at what price they were valued, which produced much perplexity in the breasts of the ambassadors, who were unwilling to say little for fear of degrading those for whom they treated; and they dared not say much, as in that case they would be obliged to pay heavily. In this dilemma they told the king to fix his own price. Thorus then said, "If these people were of any use to me, I would not part with them, but as they are not, take them for what you choose!"

The ambassadors then consulting with each other preferred giving large sums for the ransom of the Greek chiefs, as they reflected that were they to give little, they would be sadly vilified in the eyes of the Armenians. They then brought to Thorus an immense quantity of treasure, which when he saw, he exclaimed with surprise, "What! are my captives indeed worth so much!" He then distributed the whole of the money to his troops. The ambassadors being astonished at this munificence, Thorus addressed them thus, "I reward my soldiers that they may again take your chiefs and favourites and bring them in fetters to me!" The ambassadors then set out with their released countrymen for Constantinople, and on their arrival there made the emperor acquainted with

all that had befallen them. Upon this he despaired of being able to subdue Thorus, and by the mediation of the court of Antioch made peace with him. A war, however, subsequently broke out again between them, in which Thorus was again successful, having captured the Greek chiefs and received ransom for them as before.

- A. D. 1146.
Haican
era 595. About this period the Scythians commenced making destructive inroads into Kharberd and Marash; and Masuda the chief of Iconia exercised a despotic power in Mesopotamia. In consequence of these events, Gregory the pontiff quitted the castle of Zovk, and accompanied by his brother Nierses and all the clergy belonging to the pontificate, went to Hironcla, then in the possession of the Latins. Here he settled, and in the course of some time afterwards established a distinct pontificate in Hironcla, which he ornamented with a splendid church built in the form of a cupola.
- A. D. 1147.
Haican
era 596.

- A. D. 1154.
Haican
era 603. In the mean time the Scythians continued harassing Marash and Kharberd, extending their depredations to the Black Mountain and plains of Cilicia. Here, however, they were met by Thorus and driven out of the country with loss. The son of Masuda named Ghulich Aslan, (in Turkish, Guluch Arslan) at the instigation of the emperor, and contrary to the express stipulation of his father, about this period marched to attack

Thorus, but was routed and put to flight. Thorus then carried arms into Ghulich's country, and committed horrid devastations; but in the course of a short time was prevailed upon to make peace with him. At this epoch Stephaney the king's brother rebelled, and became independent. He, at the head of a body of bold determined troops, recaptured the Black Mountain from the Scythians, and marching into Marash subdued the whole country. On his return from this part, the Greeks with whom he had before had some contests, in which they were beaten by him, waylaid, and caught him. They then put him to a most cruel death, tying his hands behind him, and throwing him alive into a cauldron of boiling water. His body being thrown carelessly away by his murderers, was afterwards found by some of his countrymen, and buried by them in the convent of Arkah Calin. Stephaney left two sons, named Leo and Reuben, both of whom in the course of time reigned in Cilicia. The news of the dreadful fate of their brother reaching Thorus and Mileh, they were seized with boundless grief and horror, and forthwith began to seek vengeance on his murderers the Greeks, destroying numbers of their towns and villages. They afterwards made a descent on the island of Cyprus, where they caused extensive mischief,

A. D. 1156.
Haican
era 605.

A. D. 1157.
Haican
era 606.

A. D. 1158.
Haican
era 607.

taking a vast number of captives, cutting off their ears and slitting their noses, and in this maimed state sending them to Constantinople. The sight of his subjects thus mutilated, excited the warmest anger of the emperor, and he forthwith levied a large army and sent it against Thorus. The Armenian monarch met this force, attacked, and entirely defeated it. The emperor then assembling a still larger force than before, marched at their head into Cilicia. After several encounters which sometimes were decided in favour of the Armenians, and at other times of the Greeks, Thorus became reconciled with the emperor, by whom he was honoured with the title of Pansebastus. A few years after this Thorus died, after possessing the government twenty-four years, leaving one son yet in his infancy, whom he delivered in charge to his father-in-law Thomas Pail, a renowned chief and a native of Antioch. This individual having received the boy, governed Cilicia for one year.

A. D. 1167.
Hâican
era 616.