

**ARMENIAN POEMS,
RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
VERSE. [BOSTON-1917]**

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Armenian Poems, Rendered into English Verse. [Boston-1917] by Alice Stone Blackwell

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PREFACE.

TWO considerations led to the publication of this book. The first was the belief that the sympathy felt for the Armenians in their unspeakable sufferings at the hands of the Turks would be deepened by an acquaintance with the temper and genius of the people, as shown in their poetry.

The second was the fact that Armenian poetic literature, while well worthy to be known, was practically inaccessible to English-speaking readers. Its treasures are locked up in an almost unknown language.

Each of these translations in verse has been made from a literal translation in prose, furnished to me in English or French by my Armenian friends. Among those who rendered this help were the late Mr. Ohannes Chatschumian of Leipzig University, Professor Minas Tchérâz of King's College, London, editor of "L'Arménie;" the late Kevork Tourian, the martyred Bishop of Trebizond; Archag Tchobanian, Garabed H. Papazian, Haroutune Aslan, Arsen Diran, Avedis B. Selian,

Sahag Chuchian, Aram Torossian, Karekin Manoukian, O. H. Ateshian, Arshag D. Mahdesian, editor of "The New Armenia," Bedros A. Keljik and D. K. Varzhabedian.


The poems that make up the first part of this volume were published by Roberts Brothers in 1896. They were well received, as the press comment in the Appendix will show. The book has been long out of print. This new and enlarged edition has been privately printed in order that the entire proceeds might go to the relief fund.

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INTRODUCTION.

RMENIAN poetry is so full of allusions to Vartan, Avarair, Haig, and Thorkom or Togarmah, as well as to the Garden of Eden, that a few preliminary notes are necessary by way of explanation.

Armenia is a mountainous region of Western Asia, lying around Mount Ararat, and containing the sources of the Tigris, Euphrates, and Araxes rivers. It is south of the Caucasus Mountains, between the Black, Caspian, and Mediterranean seas. According to tradition, it was the site of the Garden of Eden.

Armenia was the seat of one of the most ancient civilizations of the globe. Its people were contemporary with the Assyrians and Babylonians. They are of Aryan race, and of pure Caucasian blood.

Their origin is lost in the mists of antiquity. According to their own tradition, they are the descendants of Thorkom, or Togarmah, a grandson of Japhet, who settled in Armenia after the Ark rested on Ararat. They call themselves Haik, and their country Haiasdan, after Haig, the son of Togarmah, one of their greatest kings. In the earliest days of recorded his-

tory, we find them occupying their present home. They are referred to by Herodotus. Xenophon describes their manners and customs much as they still exist. In the Bible it is mentioned that the sons of Sennacherib escaped "into the land of Armenia." Ezekiel also refers to Armenia, under the name of Togarmah, as furnishing Tyre with horses and mules, animals for which it is still famous; and "the Kingdom of Ararat" is one of the nations summoned by Jeremiah to aid in the destruction of Babylon.

Tradition relates that Christianity was preached in Armenia early in the first century, by the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew. It is historic fact that in A. D. 276 the king and the whole nation became Christian, under the preaching of Saint Gregory, called "the Illuminator." The Armenian Church is thus the oldest national Christian church in the world.

As a Christian nation whose lot has been cast beyond the frontiers of Christendom, the Armenians have had to suffer constant persecution,—in early times from the Persian fire-worshippers, in later centuries from the Mohammedans. Since the withdrawal of the Crusaders, to whom they alone of Asiatic nations gave aid and co-operation, the Armenians have been at the mercy of the surrounding heathen peoples. Their country has been invaded successively by the Caliphs of Bagdad, the Sultans of Egypt, the Khans of Tartary, the Shahs of Persia, and the Ottoman Turks. All these invasions were accompanied by fierce persecutions and great barbarities; but the Armenians have held tenaciously to their faith for more than fifteen hundred years.