

East until it was overpowered by the Romans under Lucullus and Pompey. From this period the fortunes of the kingdom varied with the predominance of the Romans or Greeks on one side, and the Parthians or Persians on the other. Finally Armenia lost her independence in 428 (429) A.D. as a direct consequence of the short-sightedness which Theodosius had displayed in the peace which he concluded with the Persians in 387.

The Mahometan movement in the seventh century led to fresh troubles for the Armenians, but towards the close of the ninth century the country once more found rest under a native dynasty. This lasted till 1062, when the town of Ani was sacked by the Seljuk Turks under Alp Arslan. The Byzantine Emperor at this time was Constantine Ducas, and the capital was permeated with the atmosphere of the new renaissance and had little interest for anything but its literary studies. Such a society had not the vigour or insight to deal with a rude and capable warrior like Alp Arslan. Nine years later an Emperor of a different type sat upon the throne, but it was too late, and the Byzantine Empire received its death-wound from the same Turkish conqueror upon Armenian ground. The arrival of the Crusaders a little later enabled the Armenians to maintain their independence in new abodes in Cilicia for nearly three centuries. But here, too, the new principality was not destined to be permanent. Once more, at the beginning of last century, another Christian power, that of Russia, came to their assistance, and Armenia has shown signs of entering on a new national life. It will be seen that the tragedy of her existence is due to the fact that she has formed a little Christian oasis in the midst of strong nations professing a hostile religion.

Armenian literature begins with the conversion of the people to Christianity, for the old heathen works were destroyed. The fifth century may be described as its golden age. Much of the literary activity of the period consisted of the translation of Syriac and Greek books. The history of Faustus of Byzantium, for example, is a translation from the Greek. This history of Faustus goes down to at least 385; consequently, the date of his death on page 134 (384 A.D.) should be corrected. The subjects most popular with the translators were history and theology. The new Armenian principality, mentioned above, brought a revival of literature from the end of the eleventh century, to be followed from the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries by a new period of decay. The better opportunities, however, of intercourse with Europe that the last century has afforded, have once more seen Armenian literature flourish, with a new modern Armenian as its recognized literary language. Here we find Western influences—for example, Byron—apparent.

The present volume, in which both prose and verse are represented, gives us specimens from all these periods. Extracts of a legendary character from Moses of Khorene belong to the first period. The second con-