

## THE LAMP OF THE ENLIGHTENER

DEEP in the night,  
The lantern burns bright,  
Hanging in heaven on high,  
St. Gregory's lamp, ever ablaze.  
Bans darkness from Armenia's sky.

Suspended in air,  
Its light everywhere,  
From the altar of Aragats' peak,  
This candle shines forth, ever ablaze,  
In a world often somber and bleak.

Fueled by pure tears,  
Of saints through the years,  
Beyond reach of men's sinful hands,  
Untouched by fierce winds, ever ablaze,  
Breath of dragons it even withstands.

When darkness descends,  
And terror upends  
The faith of the weak and shaken,  
This beacon of hope, ever ablaze,  
Armenia's bright souls reawakens.  
High in the sky,

Like God's watchful eye,  
The torch gives them hope of salvation,  
The Enlightener's lamp, ever ablaze,  
Brings blessings upon this fair nation.

# DAVID OF SASOON

## INTRODUCTION

THE name “David” comes from the Hebrew for “the beloved one.” Like the Old Testament David who slew Goliath, David of Sassoon is the beloved, national hero, the defiant and self-reliant youth, who by the grace of God defends his homeland in an unequal duel against a titanic oppressor.

The *David of Sassoon* presented here is Hovhannes Toumanian’s captivating rhymed version of the third cycle of the epic. The epic spans four generations of the house of Sassoon, a mountainous enclave of the Armenian Highlands, west of Lake Van and Mt. Ararat, known for its hearty folk and indomitable spirit. The epic took shape in the 10th century based on an oral tradition spanning centuries. The earliest written reports of the epic were made by Portuguese travelers in the 16th century. The basic text of the epic was first recorded in 1873 by Fr. G. Srvandzdyants. The full epic is a hefty tome that, one can imagine, took medieval tellers days to recite, easing the boredom of the long, lonely winters for these highland shepherds.