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On Armenia and Mount Ararat. By JAMES BRYCE, D.C.L.

After some prefatory remarks, Mr. BRYCE proceeded as follows :

ARMENIA, as some one said twenty years ago about Italy, is not a country, it is a "geographical expression." There is, properly speaking, no such country as Armenia, that is to say, there is no country called Armenia, which has any definite natural boundaries or any distinct political limits, or in which any single race conspicuously prevails. Armenia is perfectly undefined, and it would be impossible to lay down either a natural limit, or a political limit, or an ethnological limit, in which geographers could acquiesce. Speaking generally, you may say that it consists of the upper valleys of three great rivers,—the Araxes, which rises not very far from Erzeroum, and flows ultimately into the Caspian Sea; the Euphrates, one branch of which makes an immense sweep, first to the west and then to the south-east, until it falls into the Persian Gulf; and the Tigris, whose course is generally parallel to the Euphrates, only further east. Taking Armenia in this general sense, it occupies a lofty region, which lies round the sources and upper courses of these great streams, and also includes three remarkable lake-basins. One of these, that of the Goktcha Lake, discharges itself into the Araxes by the River Zenga. The two larger lakes of Van and Urumiah are close basins, that is, receive streams, but discharge none, their surface being reduced by evaporation. Armenia is something like 250 or 300 miles each way, and through the whole territory there prevail certain physical characteristics which enable one to describe it in common; although there are, of course, abundant differences of detail in different parts.

It is an extremely high country, no part of it being less than 2200 feet above the level of the sea; the lowest part being the valley of the Araxes. Some of the plateaux, like that round Erzeroum, lie as much as 5000 or 6000 feet above the sea-level. It is in most parts very mountainous. There are here and there considerable plains, like the plain of the upper course of the Araxes, where you have 40 or 50 miles of comparatively level ground; but in the main it is extremely rugged, and intersected in all directions by ranges of lofty, barren, dry mountains, which combine the maximum of height and the minimum of picturesqueness. I do not suppose it would be possible to find anywhere hills which, for their height, make so little impression upon the beholder, the reason being that they rise from these lofty plateaux, and therefore

do not show their full height to the beholder's eye. The country being elevated, and far removed from the influences of the Western Ocean, the climate is, as you will easily understand, extremely dry; the rainfall in some parts not exceeding four or five inches in the year. The climate also is very cold. It is hot, indeed, during the short summer, which lasts from the middle of May to the end of October; but intensely cold in winter, keen dry winds coming down from the frozen wastes which lie to the north-east and east beyond the Caspian. In the higher parts, the winter lasts full six months in the year, and is a great deal more severe than in any part of Western Europe. The climate being cold and dry, one is not surprised to find an extraordinary bareness in the landscape. Few parts of the world, not absolutely deserts, have less wood on them, and this, of course, has an unfortunate effect on the scenery. In north-eastern Armenia, of which alone I can speak from personal observation, the only wood which one can find, except along the courses of the streams, where you have plenty of bushes and small trees, is composed of a sort of oak-scrub, which clothes the slopes of some of the mountains, especially in more sheltered glens; but large trees, such as one might find in an English park, are all but unknown; and, of course, this want of vegetation still further increases the natural dryness of the climate. For the same reason, the fertility of the country is not turned to the best advantage. The soil is productive, and the summer is hot enough and long enough to enable all the crops of temperate climes to ripen, but the want of water is so great that it is, generally speaking, only where artificial irrigation can be employed that good crops can be raised. Except upon the higher slopes of the mountains, where a greater amount of rain falls, no harvests of any considerable weight or value are obtained, unless by means of artificial irrigation, where some stream descends from the mountains, which is led in small channels by the industrious peasantry through their fields. Many of the ancient irrigation works, which seem to have been constructed at very remote periods, have been allowed, in the political misfortunes of the country, to fall into decay, so that probably one sees the country now in a lower state of prosperity and fertility than it was 1500 or 1300 years ago, in the times when it belonged alternately to the Roman and Persian empires. Nor is it easy to see how it can be made anything more of until it has fallen into the hands of more enterprising and wealthy governments than those who now possess it.

I ought perhaps to tell you that Armenia is divided between

three empires. The greater part of it, including the whole southern and western part, belongs to Turkey. The south-eastern corner, towards the great lake of Urumiah, belongs to Persia. And it is a sort of race between Persia and Turkey which shall govern the worst, and which shall do the least for the countries under their control. Anything more wretched than the condition of Persian and Turkish Armenia cannot be imagined. Although Russian Armenia, that is, the northern and north-eastern part of the country, is no doubt far better off, though life and property are secure, and one or two roads have been made, still the Russians are too poor and too much occupied with other enterprises to have done half of what is wanted to develop the material resources of the country; so that the country, if it cannot be said to be actually going back, is hardly going forward. It wants a great deal more capital and more opening up before it can be a profitable investment for the Russian Emperors; and that consideration is perhaps not without its weight when we come to consider what the results of a Russian annexation of the larger part of Armenia would be. I venture to believe—and I think I am expressing the opinions of most of those who have travelled in these countries—that any further large annexation of territory in that direction (whether the Russians will insist on it or not, I do not presume to prophesy) will be merely a loss and a burden.

The people who inhabit Armenia are very various. There are two great indigenous races, and there are a considerable number of immigrant tribes, who at one time or another have poured into the country from the border lands to the east and north. The indigenous people are the Kurds and the Armenians. The Armenians themselves, who, so far as we know, have been there since the beginning of things, number about two or two and a half millions. There are really no data for arriving at a just estimate of their numbers. The total number of Armenians in the world is estimated at between four and five millions, and I fancy that fully one half of these may be held to reside in Armenia proper. They are a people who have had a great past, and who, I think, may have possibly a great future. In Armenia itself they are a quiet, submissive, stay-at-home people; peaceable in their habits, mostly devoted to agriculture, living on their own farms, cultivating them in a steady-going way, showing little political interest and no ambition, apparently indeed without any political aspirations except those which connect themselves with their religion, because they are profoundly attached to their own form of Christianity, which they have cherished ever since their conversion in the time of

Constantine, and still more intensely after they were cut off from the general body of the Eastern Church, by rejecting the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon. Physically, the Armenians are rather short of stature, and inclined to be stout, somewhat swarthy, with black hair, and usually large noses. They are extremely enterprising, and have a talent for money-getting, surpassing that of perhaps any other race in the East. Considering the intellectual power which they sometimes display, even if they chiefly display it in that direction, one cannot help thinking that if the influences of Western civilisation are brought to bear upon them in their original seats, they may develop into something much greater than their recent history has shown.

The other race, the Kurds, are in most respects a great contrast to the Armenians. They have been there also from the beginning of history, and have lived intermixed with the Armenians, although when we first hear of them (which is in the 'Anabasis' of Xenophon) they are mentioned in a district more to the south than that of which I now speak. Xenophon seems to have met them on the Upper Tigris, not far to the north of the city of Nineveh, and they still inhabit that district. They also roam over the whole country to the north as far up as the slopes of the great mountain called Alagoz, which lies about forty miles to the north of Ararat. That is the northern limit of the wanderings of the Kurds; on the south-west they may be found as far as Baalbec and the outskirts of Damascus. They are a very peculiar race, and in some ways very interesting. In figure, they are stalwart and well made, rather inclined to be short than tall, but with extremely sinewy forms. Their hair is black, but not so straight as that of the Armenians. Their eyes are small and fierce. They are excellent horsemen, and they never have their weapons out of their hands. All are nomads, who have no regular houses, much less towns and cities, but wander about the mountains with their flocks and herds; living in tents made of goats'-hair. In summer they seek the upper parts of the mountains, and in winter they come down, driving their cattle into the valleys of the great rivers, and to a large extent quartering themselves upon the Armenian peasantry, whom they rob and murder to their hearts' content. A more mischievous set of people than the Kurds cannot be imagined. They have not even the merit of being fanatical Mahommedans. Their religion is merely a cloak for robbery. It is a proverb in the Mahommedan countries, that no saint ever came out of Kurdistan. They have a bad name, not only for crimes of violence, but also for treachery and falsehood. At the

same time, it is impossible not to feel some degree of interest in them, because they show a certain amount of valour and enterprise. They have shown in one way an intense sentiment of nationality. They have never submitted to any one of the empires which have held sway in those countries. They were independent of Persia in the time of Xenophon, and they do not seem to have done more than admit in a sort of loose and general way the suzerainty of the different potentates who have from time to time overrun these regions. And at present, although they live in what we call the dominions of Turkey, they practically owe no allegiance to the Sultan, but are governed entirely by their own chiefs. As you have no doubt seen from the newspapers, they enlisted in large numbers in the Turkish armies in this war, but, as any one who knew their habits might have predicted, they proved of no value to the Turkish commanders: they employed themselves merely in rapine. When they received an order they refused to obey it, and they have probably done more to discredit the Turkish Government, by the excesses which they committed upon the Armenian peasantry, than could be compensated for by any military services they could render.

Besides these two races of Armenians and Kurds—the one of course Christian and the other Mahomedan—there is a considerable population which has from time to time flowed in from the East and North. A certain number of Circassians have come down and settled in North-Western Armenia, in the country round Kars and Ardahan. A considerable number of Tartars have settled in the Araxes valley, and spread a little into the valley of the Euphrates. A small population of Ottoman Turks has mingled with the Kurds and Armenians in the Turkish part of Armenia. And of course there is the Persian population in the towns, the Persians having a good deal of the trade of the country in their hands. All these races are Mahomedan. It is impossible to ascertain the exact proportion of Christians and Mahomedans, but I fancy that the Christian element is on the whole in the minority. In the Russian territory perhaps that is not so. I suppose that in the valley of the Araxes, taking the Russians themselves, who are only officials, and a few German colonists and the native Armenians, the Christian population may be larger; and in the neighbourhood of Van this is also the case; but over the whole of Armenia, giving the name its widest sense, I fancy the Mahomedan population exceeds the Christian.

In the midst of this country, very nearly in the centre of it, rises the great mountain which is to many of us the central interest

of Armenia, I mean Ararat. Every one must be interested in a mountain which figures so largely in the early history of our race. Ararat, however, cannot be specifically identified with any particular mountain mentioned in the Bible. You remember that the phrase in the Bible is: "the Ark rested in the tenth month on the mountains of Ararat." Now Ararat is used in the Bible there, and also in one or two other places, as a name for Armenia; or, at least, for the part of Armenia in which our mountain lies, that is the northern part. Therefore the Biblical passage only goes to this, that the Ark rested upon a mountain in the district which the Hebrews knew as Ararat, or Armenia. At the same time our mountain is so very much higher, more conspicuous, and more majestic than any other summit in Armenia, that one could hardly doubt that if the Biblical writer had any particular mountain present to his mind, it must have been our Mount Ararat. No one who had ever seen it could have any doubt that if the Ark rested anywhere in that part of the world, it rested upon that particular summit. It is so much higher, so much more isolated, so much more imposing than any other, that it is just the place where an ark ought to rest. And whatever the local legends may be worth, there can be no doubt that there are legends, going back for hundreds or thousands of years, which assign this particular mountain as the scene of the Flood, although the native names for the peak are Massis (Armenian) and Aghri Dagh (Turkish). I fancy that these legends began about the second or the third century of the Christian era. My attention was turned not long ago to a passage in a writer named Africanus, who lived in the time of the Emperor Heliogabalus, who speaks of his having visited Ararat, and of its being mentioned as the place where the Ark had rested. He says it was in Parthia, which is rather a vague name. At the same time I ought not to conceal from you that there is another legend, which is still adhered to by the Assyrian Church, and seems to have prevailed among the Jews in the time of Josephus, which places the Ararat of the Bible very much further to the south, among the lofty mountains which overhang the valley of the Tigris and the Zab. That legend appears also to be received in the Koran, where the Ark is said to have rested upon a mountain called Gudi. I speak under the correction of Arabic scholars, but I believe that is the name given in the Koran, and I think that the Gudi of the Koran is commonly identified by Arabic geographers with the mountains lying in southern Kurdistan, upon the borders of what we now call Assyria.

The mass of Ararat is fully 25 miles long from north-west to

south-east, and something like 12 or 14 miles wide. The total circumference may be about 80 miles, and it consists of two distinct peaks, which are united to one another by a sort of saddle, or col, and which beautifully contrast with one another, each seeming, by its proportions and form, to enhance the effect of the other. Great Ararat, which is the north-eastern of the two, rises 17,000 feet above the sea, and 14,500 feet above the level of the Araxes, which flows at its eastern base. Little Ararat is about 12,800 feet above the sea. The two are separated by a depression, a sort of little alpine plain, whose average height is from 7000 to 8000 feet, and over this depression there runs a track, which leads from Aralykh, in the valley of the Araxes, to the Turkish town and fortress of Bayazid. Great Ararat is an enormous dome rather than a cone, a prodigious mass somewhat irregular in shape, broadened out a good deal in the sides, but at last coming to two comparatively small peaks. Little Ararat, on the other hand, is an extremely fine and delicate pyramid, showing from some quarters as a cone, but, on the whole, best described as a four-sided pyramid, which rises up nearly to an acute point. It is as elegant a mountain, I suppose, as one could find in the world; and huge as it is by itself, because its height is 12,800 feet, so that, as I need hardly remind you, it would make a very great figure in the Alps, it looks like a mere buttress when placed by the side of its gigantic brother. And the effect of the two often reminded me of that which is produced when from Westminster Bridge one sees St. Margaret's Church against the Abbey. Just as St. Margaret's Church, which seen elsewhere would be a respectable building, looks small by the side of that gigantic pile behind it, so Little Ararat serves to give a loftier conception of the majestic mass which rises to its north-east.

Both mountains are of volcanic origin. That is a thing that no one will doubt who looks at their shape, even if he does not examine the materials of which they consist. They have been frequently examined by competent geologists, and all the rocks that are found there have clearly been produced by volcanic action. Neither peak, however, has quite the sort of summit which we should have expected. The common idea of a volcanic peak is of a tapering cone, a sort of sugar-loaf with a crater at the top. Now the top of Little Ararat, which is quite small, is nearly level, with three or four huge blocks or crags rising out of it, but nothing like a crater; and Great Ararat, whose top is rather larger, has a curious little valley lying between two big hummocks of ice, which constitute its summit, but there is nothing

like a crater at all, and it is left to our imagination to fancy whether or no there once was a crater whose edges have been worn away by the influence of the atmosphere in the many centuries, perhaps thousands or millions of years, which may have elapsed since it was first formed, or whether (as some geologists have supposed) there never was really a crater at the top at all, the mass having been piled up by lateral eruptions, which have thrown out huge jets and flows of lava on each of the sides, while the explosive forces of steam, which were also ejecting the lava, have raised the previously existing rocks into the pinnacle which we now see. Either hypothesis seems to be possible. It may be that there once was a crater, which has been destroyed; or it may be that the present summit is not the result of eruptions through a central vent, but simply of an elevating force acting from below, and upheaving the rocky masses into their present position. At any rate, so much is clear that, whether or not there ever was a crater at the top, there must have been many craters and vents along the sides. One can see in going up, and when one looks down from the summit over the sides, hundreds, I was going to say, of small volcanic vents, some perfect craters, some merely chasms or rents, out of which the lava flowed, and which have, no doubt, been active at different times in the long history of the mountain.

It is not only its volcanic character that makes Ararat singularly unlike any mountain in the Alps with which we are familiar; it is also the peculiarities of the climate. Here, in Europe, a mountainous country is always a wet country; but Armenia is so parched, that Ararat wants almost all the features which we commonly associate with a Western mountain. It has a comparatively scanty vegetation. The climate is so excessively dry, and the rock is so porous, that even the streams that escape from the snows get swallowed up as they descend the mountain, and disappear before they reach the middle; the consequence is that, except when the snows have just melted and the grass springs fresh, the mountain is painfully arid, and one may wander for miles and miles over it without finding so much as a drop of water; so that you may readily suppose that no effort of imagination can be greater than that which is required to imagine such a mountain dripping and steaming after it has recovered from a tremendous flood. I fancy that few mountains of equal magnitude are, and for that reason, less interesting to the botanist or the zoologist, because the absence of wood and the scantiness of grass and rain not only limit the flora very much, but also the animal life. Wild animals would, of course, harbour much more in a mountain where there

were deep glens and thick woods; and the woods on the side of Ararat are so small and so low that they afford little shelter either to birds or beasts. Nor is the mountain much better provided with human inhabitants. There are a few Kurds, who wander with their flocks and herds over it; but there is no permanent settlement, no village anywhere upon the skirts, except on the north-eastern face, in the direction of Aralykh, where stands a hamlet inhabited by a few Tartars, who cultivate two or three fields of oats and wheat, and feed their flocks upon pastures that are watered by one of the very few springs in the mountain. This village is Arguri (New Arguri), which is not very far from the site of old Arguri, the place where Armenian traditions placed the vineyard which Noah planted when he descended from the mountain; where they showed, until thirty-eight years ago, the actual vine-trunk which he planted, and out of which came the grapes that he partook of too incautiously; and where there was a willow-tree that had sprung from one of the very planks of the Ark itself. Those sacred relics, unfortunately, are no longer to be seen, because in the year 1840 a terrific earthquake shook down an immense mass of crag on the north-eastern side of the mountain, and overwhelmed the whole village. Every person in Old Arguri perished; the little monastery which stood there was covered up, and all the relics—the vineyard, the willow-tree, the spring of water, and everything else—were buried or destroyed. The present village of Arguri stands a mile or two lower down, and has not the same interest for us as the older one would have if it had survived. But, such as it is, it is the only place upon the mountain which is inhabited at all, and it is inhabited, not by the Armenians who lived in the old village, but by a few miserable Tartars.

Perhaps the best thing I can do, in order to give you some idea of what the mountain is like, will be to describe, in as few words as I can, the ascent which I had the good fortune to make to the summit of Great Ararat in the month of September 1876.

I ought perhaps to say that the mountain was first ascended in the year 1829 by a Dr. Frederick Parrot, a Russo-German Professor in the University of Dorpat, a man of great enthusiasm for science and for mountaineering. He undertook the journey from Dorpat for the sole purpose of ascending Ararat, and making scientific observations upon it. He made three attempts, in the first two of which he was unsuccessful, and in one of which he nearly lost his life; but in the third he succeeded. He carried with him to the top a body of, I think, five companions—three of them Armenians and

two Russian Cossack soldiers. He was naturally very much overjoyed at his success, and he wrote a book about it, a very interesting book—interesting not more from its scientific facts than from the pleasant impression it gives one of the sincere, ardent, pious character of Parrot himself. But what was his mortification to find that when he published the book hardly anybody believed it. Some of the Russian men of science, whether owing to natural incredulity or because they were jealous of his success, obstinately refused to admit that he had ever been to the top at all, and they went so far as to induce the Armenians who accompanied him (with the exception of one man, who seems to have held his peace) to declare that he had not been to the top, and that what he told was a fabrication or a mistake. When he turned to the two Russian soldiers, they, for some reason or other, were too stupid or too forgetful to give the necessary testimony, so they merely said they had made a long walk over the snow, and could not give any distinct confirmation of his details; and the consequence was that poor Parrot got discredit and suspicion, instead of meeting with the glory which properly belonged to him. But every successful ascent, every exploration of the mountain which has been made since his day, has confirmed the veracity of all the details of his story, and I think there can be no more doubt of his ascent of Ararat than there was of Albert Smith's ascent of Mont Blanc. Since that time the mountain has been ascended on several occasions. It was ascended for the second time, I think, by a certain Russian, named Spassky Aftonomoff, still living at Baku, on the coast of the Caspian, and who went up not so much for the sake of mountain adventure as in order to discover whether it was true that from the tops of the highest mountains you could see the stars at noon-day. I do not know whether he satisfied himself, but the story I was told was that he had turned his journey to account by filling a bottle on the top of the mountain with snow, and afterwards giving drops of the water into which the snow dissolved for the baptism of the children of all of his friends. Then the summit was afterwards ascended by Dr. Abich, the distinguished geologist; and in 1856 by a party of Englishmen, who seem to have been wandering about the country after the capture of Kars. For aught we know, it may have been ascended once or twice besides, but there does not seem to be any accurate record of the different ascents in existence. I ought perhaps to say that, in spite of all these ascents, and in spite of one which was made by a Russian General who took a tent to the top and surveyed it elaborately, there is not a soul living within

fifty miles of the mountain who believes that it has ever been ascended at all. It is an article of faith with the Armenian Church that the mountain is inaccessible, and, of course, when such a notion is an article of faith, human evidence is perfectly powerless.

Well, I found myself at Aralykh, near the north base of the mountain, in the month of September, the year before last, and being at the foot of the mountain, like any properly constituted Englishman I considered that the first thing to be done was to get up. But it was not quite so easy as it would have been had one been at the foot of an Alp of similar proportions, because in Switzerland one would have had nothing to do but to send for guides, and the only difficulty would have been the bargaining about how many francs a day. But here, unfortunately, not only were my friend and I completely ignorant of the languages of the country, and unable to communicate with any of the people who were to accompany us, but none of these people had ever been to the top, and they all believed that it was utterly impossible to go to the top. They therefore looked upon our desire to go up as a mere piece of madness, in which they felt a great deal of doubt as to whether they should lend their assistance. Very fortunately, however, the officer with whom we were staying at Aralykh, and to whom we had been recommended by the Russian military authorities in Tiflis, was one of the most agreeable and intelligent persons whom I have ever met, even in the military profession. He was a Mahommedan noble, who came from a district on the north side of the Caucasus, called Kuburda. Curiously enough he was a Colonel in the service of Russia, commanding a detachment of Cossacks, and an extremely strict Mahommedan; so strict that, although he had his table covered with the best wines of those countries, and with English bottled stout and porter, he never tasted any intoxicating fluid, while he constantly plied his guests with them. A man must be a pretty strict Mahommedan to carry his self-restraint so far as that. But his religious faith did not seem to make him a less loyal subject of Russia. At that time the war, although it had not broken out, was being talked of, and we could perceive that he himself thought it was very likely to come off any day. But we did not see any reason to think that either he or the other Mahommedans who are in the service of Russia would have felt the slightest doubt as to their duty to continue to serve in her armies. This Colonel was a particularly bright and pleasant fellow, and had a considerable knowledge of English literature; he could read it only in translations, still he knew

many of our best books, and was disposed to be particularly friendly to Englishmen. He made it his business to do all he could for us, and furnished us with a detachment of soldiers and horses to take us up the mountain. We started on the 11th of September from Aralykh, and rode during the day up to a place on the little plain between Great and Little Ararat, which goes by the name of Sardar Bulakh, where there is a Cossack station, with two tents and seven or eight men, posted there to watch the robbers and predatory Kurds who hover about the skirts of the mountain. We slept there, and started at one o'clock in the morning, by a pale crescent moon, to make our way to the foot of the great cone. We walked all night, but very slowly, because the Cossacks who accompanied us were extremely lazy, and insisted every ten minutes or so on sitting down and resting for a quarter of an hour. They were pleasant enough fellows, but they would not carry anything. I suppose they would have thought it beneath their dignity; and, in order to get the night wrappings and food which we required carried up, we had to engage four Kurds, each of whom took a burden on his shoulders and walked along with the Cossacks. Thus, we were a party of twelve or fifteen in all. About seven o'clock in the morning, when the sun had risen more than an hour, we reached a spot at the foot of the great cone, where the Cossacks stopped and intimated pretty clearly that they would go no further. We were quite unable to communicate with them, because although we had brought an interpreter as far as Surdar Bulakh, he was unable to come any further up, and we were left with these six Cossacks and four Kurds, unable to hold any communication whatever. We had each learned some few words of Russian, but they were only the names of things, or adverbs, or interjections, and did not go very far towards enabling us to keep up a conversation. However, the Cossacks found no difficulty at all in explaining to us that they would not go higher, because they simply sat down, and no efforts we could make by way of shaking them or pulling them, or taking out money and showing it to them, had the slightest effect in inducing them to move. I succeeded, however, I suppose more by example than by exhortation, in getting one Cossack and one Kurd to come along with me. My friend, who was not in trim for mountain-climbing, stopped at a height of about 11,500 feet, at eight o'clock in the morning, and this Cossack and the Kurd followed me further up towards the summit.

I ought to tell you that the mountain in this upper part is perfectly bare of vegetation, and consists mainly of ridges of bare rock,

separated by "screes" of loose stones. There are large beds of snow, which run down for a great distance from the top to a height of about 11,000 or 12,000 feet—long narrow beds occupying hollows between prodigious crests of rock, which look like great ribs standing out along the main body of the mountain; and one has one's choice to ascend along these snow-beds, whose inclination is pretty steep, or else along the rocky ribs that divide them, or along slopes of bare, loose, broken stones from which the snow has melted in the later autumn. Of these three I chose the loose stones, because the snow-beds, although easier when you have a party that can cut steps, are more difficult for a man going alone. I was therefore obliged to climb up these acclivities—cataacts you might almost call them—of loose stones, whose angle was so steep as to make progress extremely fatiguing. When I got to a height of 13,000 feet, the Cossack and the Kurd sat down once more, and obstinately refused to stir a step. I gave up the Kurd, because he was a wild sort of creature whom one could not expect to have any influence over; and the Kurds, I ought to tell you, have fearful superstitions about the mountain: they believe it to be infested by Djinn, or devils of different kinds, and they think it excessively dangerous for men to be wandering alone upon it; I was therefore surprised at getting the Kurd to come up as far as he did. As for the Cossacks, although their mythology is somewhat different, they, too, believe in sundry spirits haunting the mountain, perhaps angels, because the Armenians, at any rate, think the mountain is guarded by angels who watch over the Ark, which is preserved in perfect repair in one of the highest recesses, secluded from mortal eyes. When the Cossack and the Kurd stopped, I was obliged to go on alone, and from that point to the top of the mountain I had to persevere pretty steadily, going very slowly, but hardly ever stopping, because, of course, it was more a race against time than anything else; and what I really was afraid of was missing the way and not reaching the bottom at the point where I left my friend, until it should be dark. As you know, in those latitudes, the twilight is very much shorter than it is with us, so that it does not do to be caught far away from your night-quarters when the sun begins to sink. The upper part of the mountain offers difficulties, but not many dangers: that is to say, the danger lies chiefly in the solitude and in the immense height to which one has to ascend; but there are not many of those dangers—seracs, bergschrunds, and so forth—with which we are most familiar in the Alps, though now and then there are bits of rock-climbing that want care. I was able to ascend, going very little upon the snow

until I got near the top, and therefore I had not much fear of crevasses. I was able, for the most part, to avoid dangerous precipices, and therefore there was no risk of breaking one's neck. The danger that one really did incur, which I cannot disguise, was that if anything had happened to me—if I had sprained my ankle or anything of that kind—I might be lying there now, because I do not suppose that my friend would have found it possible to induce the Cossacks and Kurds to come in search of me. The last part of the ascent, when I ceased to clamber slowly up these masses of loose stone, was upon a slope of rotten rocks—a curious kind of rotten rock which I have seldom seen elsewhere. It does not exactly consist of loose stones, but rather of a soft, sulphurous rock, crumbling away under one's feet, and therefore giving an extremely bad hold. This was excessively fatiguing, but it was the more so as the air at that height had become extremely rare. Those of you who have made lofty mountain excursions, know that upon some mountains, or to some persons, the rarity of the air offers a very serious difficulty in climbing. I never experienced it before, even on the highest summits of the Alps, but upon Ararat it was so painful that I was obliged to halt and take breath every two or three steps. It was about two o'clock when I got near the top of this long and trying slope of loose, rotten rock. One could just see the edges of the plateau of snow, and hanging on the plateau of snow a curtain of clouds. What there might have been behind it was impossible to say. The whole way up I had never seen the top; I had merely seen lines of rock running up, and apparently converging towards some lofty point, and near the converging point this mantle or table-cloth of snow, and resting upon it these thick white clouds; so that by the time I had got to the top of the slope of rocks, and on the edge of the snow, I had begun to fear that there might be a snow-cone above, and it was then so late in the day that it seemed hardly possible that I should succeed in reaching the summit after all. But to my great surprise, after getting on to the snow, and into the clouds, and walking for about five minutes over the snow, which was nearly level, I saw the ground begin to fall away to the north, and all on a sudden there came a strong blast of wind which swept the clouds off, and I could see upon the north side the valley of the Araxes lying at a prodigious depth, and beyond that the summit of Alagoz, and away to the north-east the snowy summits of the Caucasus. A few minutes after, another blast of wind cleared the air a little more to the west, and I perceived the second summit, which lies separated by about a quarter of

a mile from the first, which I had reached. Descending a little valley that lies between the two, and walking to the other, I got to the highest point. That was about half-past two in the afternoon.

The view was perhaps less grand and striking than one might have expected. It was of course very extensive. One could see as far as the Caucasus on the north, a distance of about 250 miles. One could see the highest ranges of mountains round Erzeroum to the west; and south as far as the mountains of Assyria, and Southern Kurdistan, mountains visible from and bordering the valleys of the Tigris and Nineveh, and the Zab. To the east, there were the enormous mountain masses of northern Persia, which run from Djulfa out as far as the shores of the Caspian. The view, therefore, was very extensive, and it was, of course, wonderfully grand. There was a sense of expanse, solitude, vastness, which I never before experienced on any other mountain summit. But in point of beauty and picturesqueness it suffered by being too high. Those of you who are familiar with mountain ascents, must know that there is a point at which the colour of the objects that lie below almost disappears. One is able to make out outlines, but one can no longer discover those varieties of colour which give delicacy and charm to the landscape. At the height at which I stood, the distinctions of colour were almost obliterated; in fact, the tender colours, the greens and the soft greys, which one wishes to relieve the stronger hues on high mountains, had disappeared, and all that one could see was patches of snow here and there on the loftiest peaks, and interminable wastes of barren red, or brown, or yellow mountains—mountains of inexpressible sternness, mountains that seemed blank and shapeless, mountains which one could see must be of a great height, but which lay so heaped and tumbled together that it was almost impossible, even with a map in one's hand, to identify any particular peak.

I was fortunate enough to find a shorter way down the mountain, and succeeded in regaining my friend, who had remained at the height of 11,500 feet, at half-past six in the evening—only just in time, because the sun was setting, and it was so dark that one could hardly find one's way. We descended the next day to Aralykh, and from that made our way homewards by way of Erivan and Tiflis to the coast of the Black Sea.

Sir HENRY RAWLINSON said he had been more or less connected with Armenia for the last forty or forty-five years, and he was glad to bear testimony to the value and the correctness of the observations of Mr. Bryce with regard to the Armenians and Kurds. He knew the Armenians

thoroughly well. Acting in an official capacity in Turkish Arabia for twelve years, his public business had been wholly transacted by them. When Consul-General at Bagdad, he had a Consul, a Vice-Consul, or Counciller, and four clerks, who were all Armenians, and their work was well and efficiently performed, but they required looking after. With a chief who would look after them, they were the best working Orientals with whom he was acquainted; but without such supervision matters were apt to go wrong. No doubt, as Mr. Bryce had said, it would be desirable to look after their future in any arrangement that might be made in consequence of the present war; but he did not see how, being but a small proportion of the inhabitants of the modern Armenia, they could have anything like autonomy. They were also, it should be remembered, exceedingly jealous of the Russians, and of any interference with their Church. They regarded their own Patriarch of Echmiadzin as a superior person to the Patriarch of the Russians, and consequently they were not thoroughly trusted by the Russians. It was possible that in the future they might (as Mr. Bryce suggested) form a sort of barrier to further Russian advance. It was also true that the country was, financially, worthless. Although Russia might annex the whole country as far south as Lake Van, it could never pay financially; but it would pay politically, in the "prestige" which it would confer. It would enable Russia to overlap the most fertile province of Persia (Azerbaiján) to the extent of 100 miles. The frontier from Báyzíd to Lake Van took all the important Persian positions in flank, and its possession would place Russia in a far more powerful and menacing position than she at present occupied. He agreed with what had been said as to the bloodthirstiness and ferocity of the Kurds, but they had some good qualities. Some of the happiest days he had passed in the East had been in the castles of Kurdish chiefs. When their evil passions were not aroused by plunder or fanaticism, they were amongst the most agreeable Orientals, more like Europeans; and they had a high sense of honour among themselves. A Kurdish chief having given his word of honour to a brother chief, never forfeited it. He did not quite agree with Mr. Bryce in some of his remarks about Mount Ararat. He knew something of the mountain himself, having in 1834 made an abortive attempt to ascend it. It was too late in the season, and, finding it impossible to reach the summit, he only went up a short distance; but in 1846 his brother-in-law, Mr. Danby Seymour, ascended the mountain, and wrote a letter from the summit, which was still in the possession of his family. The mountain in question, however, had nothing whatever to do with the biblical Ararat. No one who had really gone into the question could doubt that the popular notion was a fallacy. The mountain had never been called Ararat in the country from the remotest times to the present day. The name was Aghri-Dagh, and Ararat did not apply to that part of Armenia at all. The history of those countries from the earliest antiquity, was now, owing to the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, almost as well known as that of Greece or Rome. There were contemporary annals of Assyria, dating two thousand years before Christ, in all of which Ararat was as often spoken of and marked geographically as was Nineveh or Babylon. It was the name of a province which might be called Southern Armenia. It never extended further north than Lake Van, but included what was now called Persian Kurdistan, being the country east of Nineveh, and between the valley of the Tigris and the Persian plateau. In the Chaldean legend of the Flood, made known by the late Mr. George Smith, the Ark was made to rest upon Mount Nizir, which was explained to be another name for the range of Júdí. It was immediately east of the basin of the Tigris, in the very centre of the province called Ararat—so called, it must be observed, not in one or two solitary instances, but throughout Assyrian history; the name, moreover, having been taken up by the Greeks, and passed

on to the Armenians. Even in the geography of Moses of Chorene, the province of Ararat had nothing to do with Northern Armenia. The mountain, north-east of Mosul, which, at the present day, concentrated in itself all the biblical traditions referring to Ararat, was still called *Jébel Júdí*, and was visited by thousands of pilgrims annually in search of relics of the Ark, who bore away with them amulets made of small portions of wood which they found at the top of the mountain, no doubt supplied periodically by the priests. The practice had been going on for centuries, and was mentioned over and over again in history. He had himself seen troops of pilgrims going to the mountain of Júdí from all parts of the East. Until the third century, indeed, there was no notion of the northern mountain representing the biblical Ararat. It first arose in the Armenian Church. The Armenians having established the high place of their religion at Echmiadzin, in the immediate vicinity of the mountain, and having such a magnificent peak at their disposal, naturally appropriated it as the scene of the great biblical event, the greatest in the history of mankind. From that time the belief in the northern Ararat had been prevalent in the Armenian Church, but it had never been adopted by any other Christians of the East, nor by any of the Greek or Latin geographers. There was no notice, indeed, in classical geography which could possibly be made to refer to the northern mountain of Aghri-Dagh as representing the culminating peak of Western Asia. That, however, in no way detracted from Mr. Bryce's great merits in ascending the mountain, which was a most laborious feat to perform. The mountain itself was certainly most interesting and most beautiful. He knew nothing, indeed, more striking than the view of Ararat, with a cap of clouds on its snowy peak, which could be seen at a distance of at least 100 miles.

Mr. DOUGLAS FRESHFIELD said there was only one point on which he differed a little from Mr. Bryce in regard to Mount Ararat. That gentleman, he thought, had somewhat underrated the flora of the mountain. He had himself been in the country, but too early in the spring to ascend to the summit of the mountain: the heavy snow-fall of the winter was just melting. At a height of between 7000 and 9000 feet there appeared to be a tolerably abundant Alpine flora, including a kind of gentian. Dr. Radde, an eminent botanist, who with Herr Abich represented science at Tiflis, had, he believed, catalogued the flora of Mount Ararat. He would not enter into the discussion with regard to the Ark. Tradition had doubtless fixed Noah's Ark on the pedestal it deemed most worthy of it, in the same spirit in which it had removed Prometheus from a rock near the Euxine, and placed the scene of his torment now on Kazbek, now on Elbruz. Mr. Bryce had said nothing about the glacier on Ararat. It was the only one in the whole of Armenia. It was on the north side of the mountain in a narrow chasm, and there was some question whether it was not of the kind known as a *glacier remanié*. It had been sometimes said that there were other glaciers on Alagoz; but, in a pamphlet recently published by Dr. Abich on the Armenian mountains, it was stated that the glacier on Ararat was the only one in Armenia.

Mr. BRYCE, in replying, said he was highly gratified at having his statements confirmed by such high authorities as Sir H. Rawlinson and Mr. Freshfield were in their several ways. With regard to the flora of Mount Ararat, he was far from saying that it was not interesting: all he meant to convey was that it was not so interesting as might have been expected from the position and height of the mountain. He noted a good many Alpine species, mostly belonging to the same genera, such as *Cerastium*, *Draba*, *Gentiana*, *Astragalus*, as one finds on the Alps or on our own Highland mountains. He could confirm Mr. Freshfield's statement that there was no glacier on Alagoz. From the top of Ararat he looked into the central hollow

of Alagoz: there were patches of snow, but nothing like a glacier. With regard to the question raised by Sir H. Rawlinson as to Mount Ararat, if time had permitted he should have been delighted to discuss it with him at full length, beginning at Berosus, and going on to Nicolaus of Damascus, Moses of Chorene, Leo Africanus, and others, down to Dr. Theodor Nöldeke, who had written a valuable monograph on the subject. He could not admit that any other Ararat had superior claims to the mountain of which he had been speaking, and for which he might consider himself to hold a brief. He was not ignorant of the difficulties of the question; and, so far from having, as Sir H. Rawlinson seemed to think, merely assumed that the modern Ararat, Massis, is the true Ararat, he had dealt with the question fully in a book which he published a few months ago under the title of 'Transcaucasia and Ararat.' Those who were interested in the question would there find the claims of Jebel Jûdí discussed, and dismissed. He hoped that the arguments there advanced would, at any rate, have the effect of leaving the question in doubt. As to the pilgrimages made to the mountains in Southern Kurdistan, Berosus stated that in his time the people carried away, not only wood, but the pitch with which the Ark was smeared, and used it as a sovereign remedy for the cure of diseases. Berosus and the Assyrians had put their peak down in Southern Kurdistan; but he maintained that the author of the book of Genesis may well be held to have been better informed, and that the Ararat of the Bible, which was also the Ararat of Moses of Chorene, pointed to and was the true northern Ararat, and had nothing to do with the Assyrian one.

The PRESIDENT congratulated Mr. Bryce on meeting with a better fate than Dr. Parrot, since no one doubted that he had made the ascent he had described in his interesting lecture, for which he proposed the cordial thanks of the members.

Eighth Meeting, 11th March, 1878.

FRANCIS GALTON, Esq., F.R.S., in the Chair.

PRESENTATION:—*Francis Hallows, Esq.*

ELECTIONS:—*Henry Byng Banks, Esq.; Harry William Birks, Esq.; Major George Robert Stewart Black; John Bowles, Esq.; James Compton Burnett, Esq., M.D.; Frank Hedges Butler, Esq.; William Alexander Duncan, Esq.; Richard Clarke Downer, Esq.; Hon. Thomas Elder; Lieut. Hon. Fitzwilliam Elliot (93rd Highlanders); James Galbraith, Esq.; Major Edward Smith Gordon, R.A.; Lieut. John Macpherson Grant (92nd Gordon Highlanders); Colonel James T. Griffin; George Jinman, Esq.; Rev. Donald Dimsdale Mackinnon, M.A.; Alexander McAlister, Esq.; William Henry Muggeridge, Esq.; George Oliver, Esq.; George William Paine, Esq.; Rev. Canon Prothero, M.A.; George Reynolds Sharp, Esq.; George Thomas Wickenden, Esq., F.Z.S.; Colonel Wilkinson.*