

British Major Robert Stuart led an expedition of four other English climbers that successfully reached the summit of Mount Ararat and created a sensation with the Kurds in 1856.

Chapter 3

1856 British Major Robert Stuart

Despite his mistakes in depreciating Parrot's and Abich's ascents, Major Robert Stuart provided an excellent account of his party's conquest of Ararat. Stuart's report from his private journal was originally published in the Proceedings of the Royal Geographic Society "Additional Notices" (1876-1877, pp. 77-92).

The sun rose in all his glory at Bayazid on the 11th July 1856. There was not a cloud in the sky to intercept his rays, and, with the exception of an occasional breeze that swept lightly down from the mountains, the atmosphere was calm and still. So far as could be prognosticated in these regions of fierce and sudden changes, the weather was set in fair.

As the Expedition of which we are about to write was novel in its object, and not without importance in its results, it is but fair towards the gentlemen who were engaged in it to give to their names an early and prominent place in the narrative. The gentlemen were as follows: The Rev. Walter Thursby, Major Fraser, Mr. James Theobald, Mr. Evans, 9th Lancers, and the writer, Major Robert Stuart. Majors Fraser and Stuart and Mr. Evans formed part of a British Staff that, during the war, had been attached to the army of Anatolia. Messrs. Thursby and Theobald were traveling in those parts for their own amusement. It would be too much to aver that the above names will live in the future traditions of the country round Ararat, for English names are distorted into curious shapes by Oriental lips; but in some form or other they will long be remembered in the plains and villages of those parts, from their associations with the sacred heights of Aghri-dagh.

Our courtege consisted of Iss-hak Bey, Chief of the Ararat Kurds, to whose special care we had been committed by the Kaimakam of Bayazid, Hadgi Mustafa Effendi, a zaptieh, or native policeman, who, in addition to other functions, acted as interpreter between our party and the Kurds. Our droagoman, a Smyrniote, who figured in the remains of an expensive British Staff uniform and a suridji [aid] to take charge of the horses.

The snow-clad cone stood out in distinct relief against the morning-sky, cold, grand, and forbidding. By some perspective illusion, the lesser peak, though 4000 feet lower, and some miles more distant, seemed the higher of the two. This can be explained by the principles of optics; but we fear in a manner that would not interest many of our readers. One useful lesson, however, may be learned from this fact: namely, that travelers should be careful in trusting to first impressions, seeing that the senses are apt to be misled when first brought into contact with unaccustomed objects. We now struck off in a northeasterly direction across the plain. One hour from Bayazid we came to the Shekheli, a deep narrow stream as clear as crystal, that, collecting the watershed of the adjacent mountains, winds round the base of Ararat and unites with the River Araxes. We traversed this stream by means of a handsome one-arched bridge of Genoese construction, much impaired, like all its kindred works of the elements. The parapets have been swept away, the foundations show signs of weakness, and the traveler of next year will perhaps find it gone.

The plain of Bayazid, unlike those of Alishkurd, Passine, and Erzeroum [Erzurum] is, for the most part, barren and repulsive, yielding nothing but a sparse, lank grass, insufficient for pasture. The soil is everywhere stony and the stone volcanic. After crossing the Shekheli we observed much that would interest the naturalist: small lizards of a brown colour were in some places so numerous that they started aside in scores from every footfall of our horses, while at the same time swarms of large red-winged beetles buzzed pertinaciously around us, and every now and then we crossed the shiny trail of snakes; gray partridges abound on the stony ground at the foot of the mountains, crows and swifts are seen in scanty numbers, and further on some indications of man appear in the few wretched villages which, without inhabitants in summer, form the retreat of the Ararat Kurds when the approach of winter drives them from the heights. Here the plain assumes a more genial aspect, extensive meadows and cornfields meet the view, and beyond these was a forest of tall reeds where, according to the zaptieh, wild swine make their lairs, while bears and wolves are to be found in the neighbouring heights. Thus far we kept to the plain, skirting the base of the mountain and following the salient and reentering angles of its shoots. But at length, after doubling a surging projection composed of broken masses of basalt, we struck to the left and commenced the ascent through a broad opening enclosed between vast ridges of volcanic formation. For the first hour after quitting the plain, the ascent was, with a few rough exceptions, easy and gradual. Our path followed the windings of a noisy stream, which irrigates at intervals in its course patches of fertile land, yielding at this season wheat, or barley, or hay. On one of these plateaus, which spread out to some acres, a halt was unanimously agreed upon. Offsaddling and knee-haltering our horses, we gave them the range of the pasture, where they enjoyed their brief respite from toil, rolling, grazing, and fighting by turns.

We were soon reseated in our saddles, and now our way constantly increased in difficulty, becoming at every step more rocky and acclivitous. Our trusty little horses were, however, perfectly at home at this work; with the agility and circumspection of a cat, they carried us safely and jauntily over ground that would try the nerves of any one not accustomed to the horsemanship of Armenia.

After an hour or so of this tedious work we reached what might be designated the shoulder of the mountain. Here the ground became easier, the plateaus more frequent and extensive, and sheltered spots presented themselves suitable to the abode of man. The climate too was gradually changing for the better: instead of the hot air of the plain we were now inhaling a light breezy atmosphere, tempered with an occasional dash of cold, as every now and then a gust of wind fresh from the upper snows swept down upon us. With the advance of day a mantle of rolling clouds had gathered round the cone; near at hand, however, there was enough for present interest. We were now about 5000 feet above the plain, and as we were slowly working our upward way we came upon the first encampment of the Ararat Kurds. It was situated in a sheltered hollow where there was good water and green pasture in abundance; the black tents of Kedar harmonized well with the character of the surrounding scenery, while the dwellers therein, with their swart faces, piercing eyes and outlandish dresses, gave the finish of life to the whole. Our unexpected arrival and strange appearance created an immense sensation amongst these wild people. They turned out in crowds to see us, but hospitality was their first thought; wooden bowls of "Iran," or sour milk diluted with water, were brought forward in quick succession, and not until we were sufficiently regaled did they give way to their curiosity: then old men and maidens, haggard gypsy-like women and young children, all gathered round to survey strangers from Frankestan; even their dogs, which, by the way, are famed for strength and ferocity, manifested their excitement by a sustained chorus of angry barking. Pushing on thence, we passed these detached encampments at frequent intervals; and at 3 p.m. we reached the quarters of the chief himself, at an elevation of about 6000 feet above the plain.

These Kurds, as has been already stated, change their place of abode with the seasons. In the month of May, when the winter is well past, and spring vegetation has made some progress, they move with their penates, families, and all they possess, to the heights, returning to the plain towards the end of September, when frequent atmospheric commotions announce the dangers of a prolonged stay at such an elevation.

Their villages in the plain, which are thus deserted for several months in the year, are of the most primitive description, being nothing more than mud contrivances; in which the inmates, sheltered from cold, pass a long hibernation, in company with their horses, sheep, and cattle, besides vermin of different sorts in visible swarms.

Rising with the first streak of dawn, the "fingan" of hot coffee was soon got ready and circled round. Every man charged himself with a small supply of provisions and a coil of strong jack-line in addition to his trusty pole with an iron spike at one end and a hook at the other. We had also among us a race-glass, a small hatchet, and a leather bottle of rum. Thus equipped we started off in full confidence of success, being accompanied by Iss-hak Bey and the zaptieh on horseback, and two or three men on foot. There was, however, one drawback to the anticipated pleasure of the day, namely the illness of the Rev. Mr. Thursby, by which we were deprived of his company. This illness, which happily was not of a serious nature, had come on during the night, and, as he required nothing but repose, we thought we might safely entrust him to the care of our Kurdish friends.

For the first hour or so our progress was comparatively easy, the ground differing but little from that which we had traversed on the preceding day—the same green plateaus, well-watered and in some places sheltered by huge ramparts of volcanic rock. At an hour's distance from the Bey's quarters, we came upon the most elevated of the detached encampments. It numbered seven tents, and was situated upon an extensive well-watered plateau, about 6000 feet above the level of the plain. Beyond this the aspect of nature became at every step more sterile, wild, and forbidding. The radiating ridges of basalt increased in height, became more rugged and impracticable. A track, known only to the mountaineers, enabled us, however, to make tolerable progress. After two hours we were obliged to relinquish our horses; for it was now a scramble up and down precipices, and over masses of broken rock, where only men or mountain-goats could find footing. It was pleasant to see every now and then, amid all this desolation, a patch of green peep out from beneath some sheltered nook, on which was to be found in abundance forget-me-nots, double daisies, gentianella, and primulas, all growing in unromantic fraternity with wild shallots. After three hours of stiff work, we arrived at the foot of the cone, which, owing to the continued fineness of the weather, we were enabled to see to the very summit; and it was no ordinary sight. We stood in the immediate presence of the vast cone-shaped mountain, 6000 feet high, covered with eternal snow to the very base!

Arrived at the foot of the cone, our Kurdish friends declined proceeding any further, and we held a consultation as to the best mode of ascending. Independence of thought and action is the well-known characteristic of Englishmen. This spirit, we need scarcely say, manifested itself in our council. The end of it was that three decided upon trying the ascent on that part of the mountain that lay just in front of us, keeping as much as possible to the snow, while the fourth, Major Fraser, chose a line for himself, bearing away to the right, in the intention of availing himself as much as possible to those parts from which the snow had disappeared. His reasons were good. He had had much experience in rough mountain work in South Africa, where snow is unknown, and he did not deem it prudent on the present occasion to essay an element that he had not proved; whereas of the others, two were experienced Alpine travelers, accustomed to glaciers and eternal snows.

For the present, leaving Major Fraser to himself, let us follow the movements of the others, The line of ascent being determined on, the grand work of the day began in real earnest. It was now six o'clock, and we had already been

three hours on foot, working upwards against difficulties of no ordinary character; but as yet no one dreamt of fatigue; on the contrary, it appeared as if these three hours had been but a preparative for the day's work. A bit of unleavened bread, and an occasional mouthful of snow, served to sustain the strength and to ward off hunger, without loading the stomach or touching the mind—the two great evils to be avoided on occasions of great bodily exertion. For some time we held pretty well together, making on the whole satisfactory progress. But, after the first 1000 feet put differences in our climbing powers, the snow, with which previous experience had familiarized Theobald and Evans, sorely taxed the unaccustomed limbs of Major Stuart, who accordingly turned aside to a projecting ridge of broken basalt, which extended far up towards the summit. To one standing at the foot of the cone this ridge would present the appearance of a paved road, but it consisted in reality of huge masses of basalt, thrown together by volcanic force in making way over which the utmost agility and circumspection were required to guard against the chances of broken limbs.

At this time Theobald was some hundred yards in advance. Evans and Stuart had so far held pretty well together, but the latter now giving in, the former followed, with gradually increasing interval, on the traces of Theobald. On, on they went, higher and higher; now lost to sight in a fleecy cloud, now re-appearing, but diminished to little moving specks on the upper snows. The higher they ascended the greater the difficulties they had to contend with. As the air became more rarefied, the action of the lungs was quickened, and every effort told more sensibly upon the strength. At the same time the angle of the slope continued to increase, while the footing became more difficult, because the upper part of the mountain is perpetually coated with an encrustation of ice, lightly sprinkled over with snow. For, during the summer months, the heat of the sun is sufficiently powerful to melt the snow in those elevated regions whenever the absence of clouds and mists permits his rays to have their full force; but let them be intercepted but for a moment, and their effects are counteracted by the normal temperature of the atmosphere, which at all seasons is below freezing point; over the icy crust thus formed the snow, swept from the neighbouring drifts by the never-ceasing wind, collects in a thin layer as fine and as dry as powder, deep enough in some places to conceal what is beneath, but not to afford a firm foothold.

The utmost circumspection is consequently required at each step in climbing this part of the mountain; and the spiked staff will be found of invaluable service, as well in sounding the surface as in aiding the precarious effort of the feet. Theobald and Evans, as has been already noticed, were experienced Alpine climbers, and being strong of limb and sound of mind, they held successfully on their upward course, without check, slip, or drawback, until at 2 o'clock p.m. the former crowned the final difficulty, and found himself on the summit of Mount Ararat. He was followed at an interval of about an hour by Evans, who, though less active, had equal perseverance.

Leaving them for a while to their own musings on this solemn height, let us now return to the Major Stuart, whom we left, some three or four hours back, in an exhausted state 4000 feet lower down. A feverish cold, from which he had been suffering for some days previously, had much impaired his strength, and thrown him out of that condition necessary to the performance of a severe or protracted physical effort. He did not feel this at starting; the excitement of the occasion, the first flush of returning health, and the bracing effects of mountain air, had inspired him with a premature confidence in his own strength. As we have seen, he got on very fairly for a time, holding his own with the others; but the undertaking was beyond his force, and he was obliged to give in after ascending about 2000 feet of the cone. Sitting down under the shelter of one of those masses of basalt over which he had been climbing, a drowsy feeling came over him, and he was soon fast asleep. In about an hour he awoke somewhat refreshed, and, on looking around, he found himself the object of attentive consideration to a number of ibises grouped on a rock close by, from whence they could carry on their survey in safety. Curiosity and astonishment had imparted increased luster to their beautiful eyes as they examined with earnest gaze this strange intruder on their domains. On perceiving him move they bounded away, springing with light unerring foot from point to point over the rocks, and soon were lost to view. What had let them up so far it would be hard to say, for at the level of 13,000 feet above the sea there is no vegetation except some scanty lichen, which could not serve for food to these animals. Some small birds were also seen on the wing at this height, but of what species there was not sufficient opportunity of judging. Above this all was solitude, silence, and snow.

Major Stuart, finding himself unable to proceed higher, now addressed himself to the task of descending. To accomplish this step-by-step would have been too laborious; he therefore resolved to try what could be done by a glissade. The angle of the mountain-slope with the horizon was in this place about 35°. Taking his seat then on the snow, he looked well to his balance, steadied himself with his staff, and, giving way, off he went like an arrow shot from a bow, and in the course of a few minutes he found himself once more safe and sound at the foot of the cone. Iss-hak Bey, who, from a convenient position, was keeping close watch on every movement of our party, sent forward one of his men to meet the unsuccessful climber, received him with every demonstration of respect when he joined him, gave him his pipe and bade him welcome. "The English Bey is, no doubt, very brave and very enterprising," said he, "but he has attempted what is beyond the strength of man, and what, according to the traditions of my race, is contrary to the will of Allah. You were wise not to ascend any higher, and my heart is throbbing for the two other noble Beys who are this moment hidden from view far up among the driving mists, Allah Rerem (God is good)." "Fear not, great chief," replied the Major, "they are younger and more active men than I am, and, Inshallah, they will succeed." "Bakalum" (we'll see), was the only rejoinder; and the Major, returning to the chief his pipe, lay down on a green spot, and fell into a profound sleep, more grateful than Sybarite ever knew on a bed of roses. From this almost comatose state he was suddenly recalled to waking existence by the exclamations of Iss-hak Bey and his attendants. Theobald had just

gained the summit of the mountain; at that moment there was not a cloud to intercept the view, and, notwithstanding the great height and distance, the Kurds were able with the naked eye to follow all his movements. "Mashallah!" cried the chief, "God is great, and you English are wonderful people! We have always thought, and our fathers before us thought, that God had made that holy mountain inaccessible to man; many have tried to ascend it but no one has ever succeeded until you come, and without any preparation walk straight up from the base to the top. Allah be praised! We have heard strange things of you, but now we see them with our own eyes." All this time the Kurds were straining in their keen, dark surprise, uttered in their native tongue, followed in quick succession as they watched the movements of the two climbers. The power of vision possessed by this people is truly astonishing; almost equaling that which Europeans attain by the means of telescopes. It can only be accounted for by the constant activity imposed upon the organ by their social habits, to which perhaps may be added their simple diet and the purity of the atmosphere in which they live.

As has been already mentioned, Mr. Theobald was the first to reach the summit; it was about two o'clock when he gained the highest point, where, after somewhat less than an hour, he was joined by Mr. Evans. After making a few observations as to the shape and extent of the top, they commenced together the work of descending, and, keeping closely to their tracks of the morning, they got back in safety to the tents at 6:30 p.m.

We must now follow the movements of Major Fraser, who, it will be remembered, chose a line of his own. Diverging from the point where the others commenced the ascent, he skirted the base of the cone until he found what appeared a more practicable slope on the south-eastern side. The plane from this point to the summit was apparently even and unbroken, and presenting an uninterrupted surface of snow, it seemed to promise easier work for the feet and in general greater facilities of ascent: therefore, notwithstanding the want of previous experience in snow-climbing, he determined on this line. As long as the snow was soft he found the work easy enough; step-by-step for hours he industriously kept a direct course, and had got within 1000 feet or so of the summit when he began to experience the difficulty of footing arising from the icy incrustation already described. In attempting to strike across to what appeared an easier line, he slipped on a sheet of ice lightly covered with snow, and, losing all control over himself, downwards he went with a rapidity, which promised to bring him quickly to the point from which he started in the morning. Utterly unable to arrest his downward course, all he could do was to keep himself well on his back, body rigid, and legs stuck out. Natural instinct suggested these precautions; without which he might have spun round like a trencher, been deprived of consciousness and lost. As it was he came off unhurt. After a glissade of 1000 or 1200 feet, the snow, becoming deeper and softer, collected in such quantities between his legs as gradually to retard his speed, and at length it brought him to a stop. But now what was to be done? The loss of so much time, distance, and labour in an undertaking of this kind was certainly most serious, but failure from a cause of such trifling sound as a mere slip of the foot would have been worse than mortifying, it would have been ridiculous by his easy ride over the snow; so readjusting his nerves, and bracing up his energies for a renewed effort, he made his way with some difficulty across the snow to a ridge of basalt that, commencing near the summit, extended downwards about 2000 feet. This ridge consisted of masses of basalt, and over its crest Major Fraser now sought to make his upward way. Such resolution deserved its reward; by dint of great labour and perseverance he succeeded in gaining the summit at about 3:30, having exchanged signals with Theobald and Evans, who had by this time accomplished some hundred feet of the descent. After reaching the highest point, he kept to their tracks in descending, and got back to the tents at midnight. His return was hailed with great satisfaction by the rest of the party, who, as night wore on, had become more and more anxious for his safety; for it is easy to conceive how great are the dangers to which one would be exposed at night on those rugged heights with no light but the delusive glare of the snow and no shelter in the event of one of those sudden storms which often burst with terrific violence in elevated mountain regions. When the fierce barking of the watch-dogs recalled us to consciousness, and before we could well collect our scattered thoughts, the Major entered the tent accompanied by a guide, whom he had procured at the upper encampment. A light was instantly struck, refreshment ordered, and while these were forthcoming we listened with breathless interest to the narrative of his day's adventures.

Major Fraser wrote a letter on July 27, 1856 that included the following:

I had a most narrow escape of losing my life. I had proceeded to Persia, partly on duty, partly for pleasure, being near Mount Ararat, determined to try and ascend the great peak... When within a few hundred feet of the summit... I suddenly slipped, and was shot downwards with the speed of lightning upwards of 1,000 feet; but instead of being dashed to pieces on the rocks at the foot of the glacier, some 4,000 feet below, I was stopped by the sprinkling of snow lying on the surface of the ice being pushed before me, which at length formed a sufficient heap to arrest my further progress. I need not say that I became insensible from the rapidity with which I shot over the surface of the ice, as my breath was quite stopped, being at an elevation of about 17,000 feet at the moment. But I had presence of mind enough to retain possession of my ice-staff as I fell, by the aid of which, after three hours' anxious and most fatiguing labour, I at length got off the surface of the glacier without further accident. I, however, had both hands frostbitten to the

second joints of the fingers, but they recovered, though I cannot yet feel them. It does not, however, prevent my using them, as you see... I felt thankful for my miraculous escape from death, though I said little to my companions. I ascended the mountain quite alone, and in a different direction from my companions, which much increased my danger, as had I lain there all night, the cold would have killed me. I fell asleep thrice on the summit alone from the intense cold, and got back to the tents of the Koords, with whom we were staying, at midnight, having been twenty hours on foot, and quite alone.

The Bey and some of his chief men were not long in making their appearance. They had altogether relinquished the hope of seeing the Major again, looking upon him as the victim which must needs have been sacrificed for what they considered an enterprise of temerity and folly; but when they saw him back amongst them, unscathed in life or limb, they indeed then began to feel the force of what we asserted, that many things forbidden to the Kurds are allowed to the English.

Rev. W. Thursby and Major Stuart set out early in the afternoon of the 13th July, having decided upon devoting two days to the work. On the first, to ascend as far as might be deemed safe before sunset; then sheltering themselves as well as they could for the night, to finish the task on the following morning. Two young Kurds accompanied them from the tents, carrying their rugs and sheepskin cloaks, together with a small supply of provisions, consisting of unleavened bread, cold mutton, a small flask of brandy, and another of tea. Major Stuart and his friend proceeded slowly and cautiously, husbanding their force with the utmost care, and looking well to their footing at every step. By this means they reached the foot of the cone with strength still unimpaired. They then turned off the south and began the ascent on a part of the south-eastern flank, which the combined action of sun and wind denuded in summer time of snow. By 2000 feet above the base of the cone, and here their Kurdish attendants came to a stop and refused to proceed any further, alleging in justification ancestral traditions and the fear of treading on hallowed ground. The attempt to combat such arguments would have been a simple waste of time and words. They were dismissed in the most gracious manner possible; but to ensure their return in the morning for the rugs and coats, it was deemed as a reason the danger of wild beasts or robbers. There was some difficulty about this, for the Kurd does not feel to be himself without his beloved weapons. About 700 yards to their left, and nearly on the same level with them, lay a field of glaciers, the only ones to be seen on the southern slopes of the mountain. Their halting-place was on a mass of limestone-boulders that varied in size from one to five feet in diameter. The sight, traveling far over the mountains and plains of Georgia, Azerbigjan and Kurdistan, was fairly lost in space and found its limit only in the dim amalgamation of earth and sky. There are many who believe that the Aghri Dagh of Armenia is identical with the Mount Ararat of Holy Writ—others again affirm, and not without strong reasons, that on the subsidence of the Flood the Ark rested on Ghibil Indi, a mountain of Kurdistan. Without pretending to weigh the merits of these conflicting opinions we may observe that the popular belief throughout Central Asia is favourable to the former. The Kurdish tribes who dwell on the slopes and at the base of the Aghri Dagh, and whose forefathers have been there since the earliest dawn of history, the native Christians of Georgia and Armenia—all indeed who preserve the traditions of the land—are familiar with the story of the Deluge. Their account of that great event varies but slightly from that which has been transmitted to us by Moses, and they hold it as part of their faith that Noah's Ark rested on Aghri Dagh, that the hull still remains on the summit deeply buried out of sight, and investing with a sacred character the place thus chosen to be, as it were, the second cradle of the human race, they believe that to scale the mountain is not only impossible, but that any attempt of the kind would be followed with the immediate displeasure of Heaven."

Iss-hak Bey remembered every traveller within the last fifty years. He remembered all about Parrot's attempt in 1829. Parrot tried on the north side and Abich in 1845... The summits in the form of a scalene triangle, the base, which is on the eastern side, lying nearly due north and south, being about 100 yards [yards], in length, the perpendicular about 300 yards. The apex of the triangle is the highest point of the mountain; separated from it by a dip, 70 yards wide and 25 deep, is another point which attains very nearly the same height. The area of the triangle is level, or rather slightly concave, suggesting the idea of an extinct crater. Such is the summit of Mount Ararat according to the concurrent observations of our party. Hundreds of Kurds were eye-witnesses of our ascent. These same Kurds confidently assert the failure of the travelers whose names we have quoted.

In walking on the summit of Mount Ararat one sinks about midway to the knee in the snow, which is so fine and dry, that it does not adhere to or wet the boots; but it rises like dust to the wind, blinding the eyes and penetrating the clothes and pockets. The rocks on the sides of the mountain consist chiefly of trachyte porphyry, and the effects of strong volcanic action may be seen wheresoever the natural surface is exposed. There are two extinct craters on the eastern side of the mountain, just above the saddle, which connects it with Lesser Ararat. Most healthy men possess a reserve of strength that will carry them through a heavy day's work without food. The stomach, especially in the case of persons accustomed to regular and generous diet, may rebel against this; but after the first few murmurings, it will settle down into a sullen acquiescence. Quietly and steadily Major Stuart and Mr. Thursby moved upwards. Hour after hour this laborious work continued, but thanks to the system they had adopted, without producing fatigue, or sensibly taxing their strength. They were marvelously aided, too, by their iron-tipped staves.

On a rocky spot, about 1200 feet from the summit, and under the western lee of a high mural ridge, is a cross, which records the expedition of Professor Abich in 1845. It is made of oak, the upright being 7 feet above ground, the

transverse bar 3 feet in length, and it is firmly wedged in between two large masses of rock that lie close to each other. From the action of the weather the surface of the wood has become so soft that it may be scraped off with the nail of the finger to the depth of one-eighth of an inch. On a brass plate 6 inches by 4, screwed on at the inter-section of the bars, is engraved in Russian the professor's name, and date of his ascent. Several mutton-bones, partially decomposed, lie about at the foot of the cross, and a kama or short Turkish sword, which was in very fair preservation, the blade, though without a scabbard, having suffered but little rust. Major Stuart took possession of this kama, and should any future future traveler reach the summit of Mount Ararat he may, perhaps, find it on the highest point, where the Major stuck it arm-deep into the snow.

With respect to the cross, it may be asked why Abich planted it so far down from the summit, if, as he asserts, he and his party reached the highest point? It would have been easy to have found as secure a position anywhere up to 1000 feet higher. About 9 o'clock a.m. our friends had the satisfaction of gaining the highest point of the mountain, and with hearts brimful of loyalty, and somewhat elated by the occasion, they drank their Sovereign's health, as the fittest mode of giving expression to their feelings [Parrot, Abich, and Khodzko had considered the planting of a Cross more fitting]. Early on the morning of the 16th preparations were commenced for the return to Bayazid. A breakfast in the highest style of Kurdish cooking was got ready betimes; milk, new and clotted, mutton, roast and boiled, and fresh chupaties in abundance, all hot and smoking from the embers; then came coffee and pipes, after which the zaptieh announced that all was in readiness. The Vaali honored them with a reception and added that it would be his duty to make a special report on the subject without delay to his Government. Be that as it may, it is now registered among the State archives at Constantinople that in August, 1856, five English gentlemen succeeded in reaching the highest point of Mount Ararat.

Stuart authored an article in the *London Times* (08/22/1856, Page 11, Col A) that stated, "The summit itself is nearly level, of a triangular shape, the base being about 200 yards in length, the perpendicular about 300 yards. The highest point is at the apex of the triangle, which points nearly due west; separated from it by a hollow is another point of nearly equal altitude, and the base of the triangle is an elevated ridge, forming a third eminence. The three points stand out in distance relief on a clear day... The impression left on my mind is, that the summit is an extinct crater filled with snow."

Major Robert Stuart also spoke in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* ("Additional Notices", Vol. 21, 1876-1877, Page 88), "The summit, as seen by them, is in the form of a scalene triangle, the base, which is on the eastern side, lying nearly due north and south, being about 100 yards in length, the perpendicular about 300 yards. The base forms a ridge with an elevation of 15 yards at the southern extremity, subsiding gradually towards the north where it merges with the level of the summit. The apex of the triangle is the highest point of the mountain; separated from it by a dip, 70 yards wide by 25 yards deep, is another point which attains very nearly the same height. The area of the triangle is level, or rather slightly concave, suggesting the idea of an extinct crater. Such is the summit of Mount Ararat according to the concurrent observations of our party."

John Evans stated similar findings in the May, 1877 edition of *Alpine Journal* ("Early Ascents of Ararat", Vol. 8, Page 220), "The cold was very intense at the summit, which consists of three peaks with rounded tops, with an apparent crater in the middle, big enough to hide a dozen Arks."

