

British Viscount James Bryce (1838–1922), law professor at Oxford and historian, summited Mount Ararat in 1876. His writing about the expedition is fascinating because he ties together so many different histories and cultures in a way that only a nineteenth century historian and writer could, allowing the reader to actually envision each part of the story in their mind even though they may be 10,000 miles away from the mountain. After his education at the University of Glasgow and at Trinity College in Oxford, he practiced law in London for a short time before becoming Professor of Civil Law at Oxford University (1870-1893). Along with Lord Acton, James Bryce founded the English Historical Review (1885). He wrote significant works in several fields; the first of these was his classic read, History of the Holy Roman Empire (1864). Bryce's account of his ascent up Ararat was entitled Transcaucasia and Ararat and he wrote another article for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society in London titled "The Ascent of Mount Ararat in 1876." Bryce's treatise and study on the U.S. Constitution, The American Commonwealth (1888 and 3 volumes in size), remains a classic study and is still used by many diplomats, lawyers and historians today. He became a leader of Great Britain's Liberal party, occupying a variety of posts, including the presidency of the Board of Trade and the chief secretaryship of Ireland. From 1880 to 1907 he was a Liberal member of the House of Commons, serving as undersecretary of state for foreign affairs (1886), chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster (1892), and president of the Board of Trade (1894-95). During those two years he also presided over what came to be called the Bryce Commission, which recommended the establishment of a ministry for education. Bryce was ambassador to the United States from 1907 to 1913; he was one of the most popular British ambassadors to ever be in Washington, since his knowledge of Americans, as revealed in his writings, was profound. His other major works are Studies in History and Jurisprudence (1901) and Modern Democracies (1921). On Jan. 1, 1914, Bryce was created a viscount. In the same year he became a member of the International Court of Justice, The Hague. Later, during World War I, he headed a committee that judged Germany guilty of atrocities in Belgium and France. Subsequently, he advocated the establishment of the League of Nations.

Chapter 4

1876 British Viscount & Ambassador James Bryce

In the late 1870s, Viscount James Bryce conducted extensive field and library research and became thoroughly convinced of the historical accuracy of the Bible set against the prevailing winds of atheism. Persuaded that the Ark might still have survived on Mount Ararat, he set out to see if anything was visible. Bryce was the first person in modern times who claimed to find wood higher around the 13,900-foot mark. He stated:

Mounting steadily along the same ridge, I saw at a height of over 13,000 feet, lying on the loose rocks, a piece of wood about four feet long and five inches thick, evidently cut by some tool, and so far above the limit of trees that it could by no possibility be a natural fragment of one...I am, however, bound to admit that another explanation of the presence of this piece of timber...did occur to me. But as no man is bound to discredit his own relic,...I will not disturb my readers' minds, or yield to the rationalizing tendencies of the age by suggesting it.

It should be noted that Dr. Parrot (1829 on the summit), German Dr. Herman Abich (1845 on Western Slope) and Russian Colonel Khodzko (1850 on the summit) planted wooden crosses on the mountain earlier. Parrot's largest piece of wood was five feet long and two inches wide. Khodzko's cross of seven feet could have fallen or been moved down to lower elevations where Bryce found it.

James Bryce (1838-1922), a well-respected professor of law at Oxford, was born in Belfast, Ireland. James Bryce, also a historian and statesman, was named Viscount and British Ambassador to the United States of America (1907-1913). He became a leader of the Liberal party, held several government posts, and was a popular ambassador to the United States. His treatise and study on the U.S. Constitution, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), remains a classic and is still used.

At Trinity College, Oxford (B.A., 1862; doctor of civil law, 1870), Bryce wrote a prize essay that was published in book form as *The Holy Roman Empire* (1864). In 1867 he was called to the bar, and from 1870 to 1893 he served as regius professor of civil law at Oxford, where, with Lord Acton, he founded the *English Historical Review* (1885). From 1880 to 1907 he was a Liberal member of the House of Commons, serving as undersecretary of state for foreign affairs (1886), chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster (1892), and president of the Board of Trade (1894-95). During those two years he also presided over what came to be called the **Bryce Commission**, which recommended the establishment of a ministry for education. At about this time he began to attack the expansionist British policy that led to the South African War (1899-1902). Thus, when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had also opposed the war, became prime minister in December 1905, he appointed Bryce chief secretary for Ireland.

Bryce, who had made the first of his several visits to the U.S. in 1870, was sent as ambassador to Washington, D.C., in February 1907. He already had made many friends in American political, educational, and literary circles and had become widely popular in the United States for *The American Commonwealth*, 3 vol. (1888), in which he expressed admiration for the American people and their government. As ambassador he dealt principally with U.S.-Canadian relations, which he greatly improved, in part by personal consultation with the Canadian governor general and ministers. In the process he also bettered relations between Great Britain and Canada, securing Canadian acceptance of an arbitration convention (April 4, 1908) originally signed by Great Britain and the United States. He retired as ambassador in April 1913.

On Jan. 1, 1914, Bryce was created a viscount. In the same year he became a member of the International Court of Justice, The Hague. Later, during World War I, he headed a committee that judged Germany guilty of atrocities in Belgium and France. Subsequently, he advocated the establishment of the League of Nations.

In 1876, James Bryce went on a steamboat from St. Petersburg 900 miles down the Volga River system to Saratof where he took a Russian train 1100 miles to the foot of the Caucasus Mountains, 126 miles via wagon toward Tiflis, and then on to Erivan, Aralykh, and up the southeast side of Ararat to summit it alone as all his companions fell by the wayside to exhaustion. While Dr. Friedrich Parrot was a Russian who spoke and taught also in German, James Bryce was an Englishman who began his journey from Russia. After his expedition, James Bryce authored the classic work, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, and has a descriptive form a writing that only educated nineteenth century authors can attain. If the reader does not enjoy history or would rather skip the wonderful reading on the voyage getting to Mount Ararat from St. Petersburg, then the reader may want to skip a few pages and go directly to Chapter V or VI below.

Introduction

The following pages contain a record of impressions received during a journey in the autumn of 1876 through Russia, the Caucasian countries, and the [Ottoman] Turkish Empire. They are first impressions only, for which no value can be claimed except that which belongs to impressions formed on the spot, and (as the author trusts) without a prejudice in favor of either of the states which are now contending in the regions here described. Yet even first impressions, if honestly formed, may sometimes atone for their crudity by their freshness. What most readers desire to know about a country is how it strikes a newcomer. A book that tries to give this, to present the general effect, so to speak, of the landscape, may have its function, even though it cannot satisfy the scientific student of geography or politics.

The Author, however, did not travel with the intention of writing a book, nor would he, sensible as he is of his imperfect knowledge, have now thought of sending these notes to the press but for two reasons. One is the unexpected importance, which the outbreak of war in the countries he visited has given to them. The other is the urgency of his friends, whose curiosity regarding Mount Ararat has made him think it worth while to print a narrative of what he saw, and who assure him that some account of a mountain which every one has heard of, but about which comparatively little has been written, would be more interesting to English and American readers than he had at first supposed.

The publication of the book has been delayed by a domestic sorrow which has destroyed such pleasure as the composition of it might have given, the loss of one whose companion he had been in the mountain expeditions from childhood, and to whom he owes whatever taste he possesses for geographical observation and for the beauties of nature.

LINCOLN'S INN, LONDON:
September 12, 1877.

Chapter I

Everyone had said to us in St. Petersburg, "You have come at a bad time. Our people are greatly exasperated against England. They regard you as the abettors of the Turks, as the accomplices in the Bulgarian massacres." (This was just after the great massacres of May [killing of 14,700 Bulgarians in 1876] had become known in Russia and before the English indignation meetings in September.) "They think that you prefer Mohammedans to Christians, and for your own selfish purposes—heaven knows what they are—are ready to support and justify all the oppressions and cruelties of the Turks." I am bound to say that we never fell into talk with a Russian without being reproached with our sympathy for the Turks. It was always assumed that we, as Englishmen, of course stood over the massacres, and we were asked how we could be so unchristian.

There was an oddly miscellaneous little library on board, consisting apparently of the leavings of many travelers, mainly Russian, but with several French novels and about as many solid German treatises, and two books in English. There is a very comprehensive *Index Expurgatorius* in Russia, and people often told me they found their best Western books carried off by the customhouse, never to reappear. But, as every body knows, Alexander Herzen's revolutionary 'Kolokol' found its way everywhere, and was read by all the officials up to the Emperor himself; and the same is said to be the case with the less brilliant socialist writers of today.

Of all modes of traveling, a river steamboat is probably the pleasantest. It is exhilarating to rush through the air at a pace of eighteen miles an hour, the swift current adding several miles to what the strong engines can accomplish. One moves freely about, reads or writes when so inclined, sits down and chats with a fellow passenger, enjoys to perfection the bracing freshness of the air and the changing hues of sunset. All this is to be had on the Volga steamers, plus the delightful sense of novelty; and although the scenery is not striking, it may be called pleasing, quite good enough to see once.

Between this boundless plain and this bold hill the Volga sweeps along in majestic curves and reaches, and the contrast between the two, the varying aspects which the promontories take as one approaches and recedes from them, give a pleasing variety to the landscape. Except at one point, you cannot call it beautiful, but it is all so green and so peaceful, the air is so exquisitely clear, there is such a sense of expanse in the wide plain and the sky vaulted over it, the stream down which on speeds is so wide, and calm, and strong, that there is a pleasure in the voyage it is easier to feel than describe.

The ship touches, but seldom at the banks, for there are few towns, and when she does stop, it is rather for the sake of taking in wood than of passengers or cargo. A gang of women is usually waiting for us at the wharf, who carry on board bundles of chopped wood; while all the spare population of the villages comes down in its sheepskins and stands looking on, munching its cucumbers the while. Sheepskins, with the woolly side turned in, are the usual summer as well as winter wear of the peasants in these parts. As for cucumbers, the national passion for them is something wonderful. They are set down at every meal in hotels and steamers, while the poorer folk seem to live pretty

much upon them and bread. If I were asked to characterize the most conspicuous externals of Russia in three words, they should be "sheepskins, cucumbers, emeralds."¹

Buoys are anchored in many dangerous spots, landmarks are placed along the shore, and at night colored lights are shown. Although our steamer drew only four feet of water there were so many shoals and sandbanks about, that, instead of holding an even course down the middle of the stream, she was perpetually darting across it from the one shore to the other, so as to keep in the deepest part of the channel. Whenever one of the shallower parts was reached a bell was rung, which brought some of the crew forward, and one of them took his place armed with a long pole, the lower part of which was marked in colors, just like the "stick" in croquet, each foot's length having a different color. This pole he nimbly plunged into the water just before the bow, till it touched the bottom, and then seeing by the marks on it what the depth was, he sang out, "vosem," "sem," "shet" (eight, seven, six), as the case might be, the vessel still advancing. As the smaller numbers began to be reached, a slight thrill ran through the group that watched, and when "piat" (five) followed, the engines were slowed or stopped in a moment, and we glided softly along over the shoal till "sem," "vosem," "deviat" (nine), following in succession, told that the risk of grounding was for the moment past.

The Tatars of Kazan [different Kazan than the village Kazan next to Mount Ararat], who are no doubt Turks, retain not only their language and their religion but their social usages; they rarely or never intermarry with the Russians, but otherwise live on good enough terms with them, and do not seem to complain of the Christian government, which has been wise enough not to meddle with their faith. Since the fall of their Khanate three hundred years ago, they have rarely given any trouble, and now serve in the army like other subjects of the Czar. They are usually strong men, lithe and sinewy, of a make more spare than that of the Russians, and do most of the hard work both here, in their own country, and at Nijni and other trading spots along the river. In their faces is seen a good deal of that grave fixity which gives a dignity even to the humblest Oriental, and contrasts so markedly with the mobile features of the Slav.

Archaeology, except perhaps as a branch of hagiology, or in the leaned circles of St. Petersburg and Moscow, has scarcely begun to exist in Russia; it is one of the latest births of time everywhere, and, as one may see from the fate of so many of our own pre-historic monuments, does not commend itself to the practical mind of the agriculturist. The only countries in which the traveler finds the common people knowing and revering the monuments and legends of their remote past are Norway and Iceland, where the sagas read aloud in the long nights of winter from manuscripts preserved in lonely farm-houses, have through many generations fired the imagination and ennobled the life of the peasant, who knew no other literature and history than that of his own ancestors.

Just as the easternmost point of the bend the river turns south, breaking through the Jigoulef ridge which has bordered it for twenty miles, and here, at the town of Samara, one seems suddenly to pass, as if through a gate in the hills, from Europe into Asia. Up to this point all has been green, moist, fresh-looking, the air soft though brilliantly clear, the grass not less juicy than in England, the wayside flowers and trees very similar to our own, if not always of the same species. But once through the hills, and looking away southeast across the boundless steppe towards Orenburg and the Ural River, a different climate and scenery reveal themselves. The air is hot and dry, the parched earth gapes under the sun, the hills are bare, or clothed only with withered weeds; plants and shrubs of unfamiliar aspect appear, the whole landscape has a tawny torrid look, as if of an African desert. Henceforth, all the way to the Black Sea, one felt one's self in the glowing East, and seemed at a glance to realize the character of the wilderness that stretches from here all the way, a plain with scarcely a mound to break its monotony, to the banks of the Oxus and the foot of the Thian Shan mountains.

By this time nearly all the cabin passengers had done, but the lower deck was still crowded with Armenians and Persians bound for Astrakhan, whence they were to proceed, by another steamer of the same company, across the Caspian to Baku in Transcaucasia, or to Lenkoran on the frontiers of Persia. Travelers are fond of talking of the Oriental character of Russia; and though the smart saying about scratching Russians and finding Tatars is pretty well exploded (nobody can be essentially less like a Tatar than the Russian is), there are, no doubt, certain points, mostly mere externals, in which Russian towns, or Russian usages, recall those of the East. What is far more curious is to find

¹ The profusion of fine gems, especially emeralds, rubies, and sapphires, you are shown in geological and antiquarian collections, sewn on to sacerdotal vestments, stuck on to the gold plates with which the sacred pictures are overlaid, is extraordinary.

on the Volga so many things and ways in Russia which remind one of America; points of resemblance between nations apparently as far removed from one another in manners, religion, history, and government, as they are in space. I amused myself in noting down some of these points of resemblance—those which are merely external and accidental, as well as those which really have a meaning—and give the list for what it is worth. Both are big countries. Their extent is immense, and everything in them is on a vast scale—rivers, forests, lakes, distances. One thinks little of a journey of a thousand miles. Land, being so abundant, is of little value; hence, partly, it is that in both a town covers so great an area, with its wide streets, its gardens, its unutilized open spaces. Hence we find in the middle of settled district ground that has never been touched by plough, or spade, or axe. Hence agriculture is apt to be wasteful, because when the soil grows less productive, he who tills it can move elsewhere. Both are countries whose interest lies in the future rather than in the past. Indeed Russia has less of a past than America, seeing that the latter owes the past of England, whereas Russian history is a very twilight sort of business till the great Polish war of the sixteenth century. Names of czars and patriarchs can be given, and a few famous battles fixed, but in the main it is an uncertain as well as dreary record of family quarrels between savage princes and incessant border warfare with the Tatar hordes. People venture boldly, live expensively, enjoy and indulge the moment, confident that things will somehow come right in the long run. No nations are so fond of speculating, writing and talking about themselves.²

Not unconnected with this is their tendency to sudden impressions and waves of feeling. Naturally a susceptible, perhaps an inconstant, certainly an impatient people, the Russians are apt to be intoxicated by the last new idea or doctrine; and their lively sympathy makes a feeling, belief, enthusiasm, that has once been started, spread like wild-fire through the whole educated, sometimes even down into the uneducated, class. This is less the case in America, but several of the political and social movements we can remember there, like Know-nothingism and (in a somewhat different way) the women's whisky war, seem to illustrate the same kind of temper.

Being new, and feeling themselves new, both are extremely sensitive to the opinion of older countries, and anxious sometimes to compel, more often to conciliate the admiration of their neighbors. In Russia, as in America, the first question put to the stranger is, "What do you think of our country?" and an appreciative answer is received with a thrill of pleasure which a German or an English breast would never experience on the like occasion. With all their patriotic self-confidence, they have a consciousness of having but just entered the circle of civilization, and are pleased to be reassured. They are, therefore, like the Americans, eager to learn what foreigners think of them, they do everything they can to set off the good points of the country, both physical and social; and they are apt to be unduly annoyed at hostile criticism, even when it proceeds from foolish or ignorant people. It is partly perhaps for the same reason, as well as from the dominant officialism, that they are more particular in some small points of social etiquette (the wearing of a black coat, for instance, or the use of appropriate titles in addressing a comparative stranger) than people are in countries where the rules of etiquette are so old that every educated man may be assumed to know them. It does not satisfy them that their material greatness should be fully admitted; they wish to be recognized as the equals of Western Europe in social and intellectual progress, and insist, as many American writers used to do, on their mission to diffuse new economical and social principles. Among minor points of similarity that strike one, may be named the mysterious element that underlies their politics—here, as in America, one hears a great deal of talk about secret societies, and cannot quite make out what these societies amount to. Even the structure of railway cars and steamboats, which seems to have been borrowed from America, and is certainly preferable to what one finds in the rest of Europe; and lastly, the general good-natured and easy-going friendly ways of the people, who, like the Americans, are far more willing to make friends with and do their best for a stranger, if only he will show some little politeness and some little interest in the country, than are either the French, or the Germans, or ourselves.

Of course I am not insensible to the many striking contrasts between the two nations, the most striking of which is that in Russia there is, speaking broadly, no middle class, but only an upper and a lower, and that lower almost entirely uneducated and politically powerless. In America, there is nothing but middle-class, a middle-class which is well-taught, intelligent, political to the marrow of its bones. Any one can draw out for himself all the differences which flow from this one, and from the singular unlikeness of religions. But the curious thing is to find in the face of these differences so many points of resemblance.

² This, however, has very much diminished in America of late years.

Saratof is one of the largest towns in Russia—that is to say, it has a population of 80,000 people. Like most towns in Russia, it has absolutely nothing in the way of a sight, not even a provincial museum or an old church; everything is modern, commonplace, and uninteresting, and life itself, one would think, must partake of the same character. All this part of Russia, down the river as far as Tzaritsyn, is full of German colonies, planted by Catherine II in the hope that they would teach cleanliness, neatness, and comfort and, above all, good methods of agriculture to their Russian neighbors—a hope which has not been realized, for they have remained for the most part quite distinct, living in their own villages, not intermarrying with the Muscovites, often remaining ignorant of their language. By far the most prosperous of these colonies belong to the Mennonite or Moravian persuasions, who thrive as the Quaker colonists thrive in America. But now one hears that they are mostly leaving Russia altogether, fearing the enforcement of the new law of universal conscription. To them, who hold war a sin, service in the army is a more serious evil than emigration to Canada; and they appeal to the promise Catherine [Catherine the Great was sovereign of Russia from 1763 until her death in 1796] made that they should never be so required to violate their conscientious scruples. The government is perplexed: it does not wish to break faith, but, like all governments, it hates making exceptions, especially invidious exceptions in favor of people who do not hold the national faith.

At Saratof we took the railway, which carried us with only two changes of carriage all the way to the foot of the Caucasus, a journey of 1100 miles, which occupied from Sunday afternoon to Wednesday afternoon. In no country, except America, is railway travelling so easy, I might almost say enjoyable, as in Russia, if only you are not in a hurry to get over the ground. The cars have a passage down the middle, and a little platform at each end where you may stand when the dust is not too distressing. The pace never exceeds, and seldom reaches, twenty miles an hour, so that one is not much shaken, and can read without injury to the eyes.

The scenery of this vast region, which the Don and its tributaries drain, is intensely monotonous, so monotonous that its uniformity almost rises to grandeur. The greenness of Northern Russia is utterly gone: everything is dry, bare, dusty; a stream seldom appears, and when it does, is muddy and sluggish. The houses of the peasantry, which further north towards the forest country are always of wood, are here mostly of clay, strengthened possibly by a few bricks or wattles. Sometimes one sees on the skirts of a village a pretty large farm standing not without evidences of wealth, but there is mostly an untidy look about it—haystacks tumbling over, fences ill-kept, nothing trim or finished. The bucolic Russian has no gift for neatness, any more than his urban brother has for comfort. Between Griazi and Voronej, the next considerable place, one runs through an unbroken forest of beech for eight or ten miles, a forest, however, as is mostly the case in Russia, whose trees do not exceed twenty-five or thirty feet in height, and which has therefore nothing of forest gloom or forest grandeur about it; it is only land covered with trees. The woods finally disappear, and one enters the true steppe, that strange, solitary, dreary region, whose few features it is so easy to describe in words, but the general impression of which I do not know how to convey. Our train traversed it during an entire afternoon, night, and day, from Voronej to Rostof, at the mouth of the Don, so the impression had time to sink in. Whatever Russia may want, she does not want land, and has no occasion to annex Bulgaria or Armenia, or any other country to provide an outlet for her superfluous children. No rock appears, except here and there a tiny chalk cliff, and farther south beds of sandstone and shale in the railway cuttings; no tree, except willows and poplars along the streams, and occasionally some bushes round one of the few villages that nestle in the hollows; no detached houses anywhere. Hour after hour the train journeys on through a silent wilderness of brown scorched grass and withered weeds, climbing or descending in long sweeps the swelling downs, now catching sight of a herd of cattle in the distance, now caught by a dust storm which the strong wind drives careering over the expanse, but with the same unchanging horizon all round, the same sense of motion without progress, which those who have crossed the ocean know so well. Even now, with a bright sun overhead, the dreariness and loneliness were almost terrible; what must they be in the winter, when north-eastern gales howl over the waste of snow? Yet even in this dreariness there is a certain strange charm. Traversing this steppe for two whole days enables one to understand the kind of impression that Scythia made on the imagination of the Greeks: how all sorts of wonders and horrors, like those Herodotus relates, were credible about the peoples that roamed over these wilds; how terrible to their neighbors, how inaccessible and unconquerable themselves, they must have seemed to the natives of the sunny shores of the Ægean. One realizes also how emphatically this is the undefended side of Europe, the open space through which all the Asiatic hordes, Huns, Alans, Avars, Bulgarians, Mongols entered, their cavalry darting over the steppe in search of enemies or booty, their wagons following with their families and cattle, unchecked, except now and then by some great river, which, if it were too deep to ford, they crossed upon inflated skins.

A dense haze filled the air as we crossed the Don, caused either by the dust storms which the wind raised, or by the smoke of steppe-fires, and cut off such view towards the sea as the flatness of the ground would have permitted. Soon we were again in the grassy wilderness, hundreds of miles wide, that lies between the Don and the Caucasus. Fires were blazing all over the steppe, whether accidental or lit for the sake of improving the pasture, I do not know; the effect, at any rate, was extremely fine when night came on, though the grass was too short to give either the volume of blaze or the swift progress which makes a prairie fire so splendid and terrible. I say “grass” from habit, but in reality it is rather weeds than a carpet of herbage that are to be found on the steppe. Though every ten or fifteen miles there is a station, a station does not in Russia imply that there is any likelihood of passengers; it is a place for the train to stop, for tumbler of tea to be consumed, for people to stretch themselves, for the station-master to exchange remarks with the engine-driver. There is but one train in the day; so its arrival is something of an event in the

neighborhood, and not to be treated lightly. Few of these stations had villages attached. All through this region, as elsewhere in Russia, one never sees a solitary house, or even a group of houses, and unless a village happens to be in sight, the country seems, according to the season, a green or a brown wilderness, unbroken by tree or hedge. Hereabouts there is not even the chance of seeing a wandering horde of Kalmucks, for that interesting race, who are nearly all Buddhists, and, as most ethnologists hold, of Mongol stock, dislike the neighborhood or Russian colonists, and keep more to the east along the Lower Volga, and by the shores of the Caspian, where the steppe is mostly salt, and therefore less fit for agriculture. It was a disappointment not to meet with this last remnant of the hosts of Zinghis Khan, dwelling in felt tents, and worshipping the Dalai Lama; but the world is large, and one cannot see everything in it. But now, some eighteen hours after we had left Rostof, several sharp craggy hills of limestone rose on the southern horizon, and behind them, dimly seen under brooding clouds, appeared a huge mass of high land, stretching east and west further than the eye could follow. It was the Caucasus, and all the weariness of the steppe [part of Chechnya] and the railway was forgotten in a moment, when, after the two thousand miles of plain we had traversed from the Gulf of Bothnia hither, we saw the majestic chain unroll itself before us.

Chapter II

In the days of the Crimean War [1853-1856], when the Caucasus [today mostly Georgia] first drew the attention of the Western world, Englishmen mostly thought of it as a chain of snowy mountains running from the Straights of Kertch to the Caspian Sea, inhabited by a race of patriotic heroes and beautiful women, called Circassians, who maintained perpetual strife against the encroaching Muscovite. Since then travelers have begun to penetrate it, and some of our own countrymen have even scaled its loftiest summits. It is really a chain; that is to say, a long and comparatively narrow strip of high land sloping steeply both ways from its' central axis; whereas many of our so-called mountain ranges are rather, like the Himalayas, the edges of plateaus, or, like the Andes, themselves a vast plateau with isolated eruptive masses scattered over its' surface. It is, however, by no means, as the old maps represent it, a uniform chain, but rather consists of three sufficiently well marked divisions. First, we have the western section, lying along the Black Sea coast, where it is comparatively low, indeed, in the northwest little more than a line of insignificant hills, and mostly covered with wood. The first considerable heights begin about the fort of Gagri, fifty miles west-north-west of Sukhum Kaleh, where one peak reaches 9000 feet. Next comes the central section, from the neighborhood of Sukhum Kaleh, a well-known Black Sea port, eastward as far as Mount Kazbek and the Dariel Pass [3950 feet and also called the Gates of Alan or the Caucasian or Iberian Gates]. This is the loftiest and grandest part, having many summits that rise far above the line of perpetual snow, and at least seven exceeding 15,000 feet [several over 5000 meters and the highest Mount Elbrus summit at 18,481 feet], deep and gloriously wooded valleys; ample seas of ice surrounding the great peaks. Lastly, there is the eastern section, which is almost conterminous with (and which I shall therefore call by the name of) Daghestan, the "Mountain Land," extending from the Dariel Pass to the Caspian Sea. Here the heights are not quite so great, though three or four peaks exceed 13,000 feet, and one, the extinct volcano of Basarjusi, reaches 14,722 feet. Approaching the Caspian, the declivities become gentler, the summits lower, the country altogether more open; so that here the people dwelling to the south found it necessary to protect themselves from the irruptions of the barbarous tribes of the northern steppe by the erection of a mighty rampart, the so-called Caucasian Wall, remains of which may still be seen near the port of Derbend, on the Caspian coast.

The length of the whole mountain country, from Taman, on the Sea of Azov, the peninsula of Apsheron, on the Caspian, is about 800 miles; its greatest width, in Daghestan, about 120. Orographically, the most remarkable features of the Caucasus are the simplicity of its structure, the steepness of its declivities, and its great persistent altitude through the central and eastern sections. Unlike the Alps and the Rocky Mountains, it does not throw out, or rather split up into, any long secondary ranges parallel to one another. Several of these, and notably Elbruz and Kazbek, are volcanic, both composed of trachyte, and Elbruz—according to Mr. Freshfield, who with Messrs. Tucker and Moore, first ascended it—showing traces of a crater at the top. The other great peaks of the central section, such as Koschtantau, are believed to be mostly granite; while in Daghestan it is asserted that limestone rocks are found to form nearly all the loftiest summits. There is no point where the range sinks below 8000 feet, and very few where it is nearly as low; whereas in the Alps one has a good many passes across the main chain between 4000 and 5000 feet high. The consequence of this is that there are only two passes across the Caucasus which are practically used by travelers, those of the Dariel and the Mamisson (a little farther west than the Dariel), and only one, the Dariel, which is traversed by a road practicable for wheeled carriages. These physical features naturally impress a peculiar character upon the scenery of the Caucasus. They are not so beautiful as the Alps, but they are more majestic. One is less charmed, but more awed. And this impression of awe is heightened by the fact, that in the Caucasus there is so much less of human life and history than in the Alps. It is just because the chain is so steep and with an axis so uninterruptedly lofty that it has formed in all ages an impassable barrier between the nomad peoples who roamed over the northern steppes and the more civilized and settled races dwelling to the south, in the valleys of the Kur and Aras [Araxes], the Phasis and the Euphrates. From the beginning of history the Caucasus is to the civilized nations, both Greek and Oriental, the boundary of geographical knowledge—indeed, the boundary of the world itself. Beyond it all is

fable and mystery, not only to Herodotus, but even to Strabo and Ptolemy. So, too, the waves of barbarian conquest that successively descended from the Ural and the Altai across the plains of the Caspian fretted and foamed in vain against this gigantic wall, and were forced to seek their ingress to the southern countries either to the east of the Caspian into Iran, or round the northern shores of the Black Sea towards the Danube valley. There has never been a time (save during the seventh and eighth centuries), down till the cession of Venetia in 1866, when regions on both sides of the Alps have not, either practically or nominally, formed parts of the same empire—Roman, or Romano-Germanic, or Austrian; whereas the countries immediately to the north and south of the Caucasus have never obeyed the same ruler (except, perhaps, in the lifetime of Zinghis Khan), until Russia established herself in Georgia at the beginning of this century. In them, as in the other mysterious boundary of the ancient world, the Pillars of Hercules, the Greeks laid the scene of mythological exploits and marvels. Colchis, to which the Argo sailed, lay under their shadow; Prometheus was chained to one of their towering rocks; near them dwelt the man-hating Amazons; beyond them gold-guarding griffins and one-eyed Arimaspians carried on perpetual war. So it remained for many centuries, down to the days of Marco Polo and Mandeville, in the east as well as in the west. Readers of the Arabian Nights will remember that there Mount Kaf is the limit of the world, and the usual threat of a magician to an obstinate sultan is, "I will transport thy city beyond Mount Kaf, and transform all the people in it into stones." Thus it is a kind of ethnological museum, where specimens may be found of countless races and languages, some of which probably belong to the early ages of the world; races that seem to have little affinity with their present neighbors, and of whose history we know nothing except what comparative philology can reveal. Even before the Christian era it was famous for the variety of its peoples. Herodotus says: "Along the west side of the Caspian Sea stretches the Caucasus, which is of all mountains both the greatest in extent and the loftiest in height. It contains many and various nations, living mostly on the fruits of wild trees."

Strabo describes the Caucasus as inhabited by an immense number of different tribes, speaking different tongues, and many of them very savage. He reports the story that seventy such tribes resort, chiefly to buy salt, to the Greek trading station of Dioscurias, on the Euxine coast, of whom the bravest and most powerful are the ferocious Soanes, and tells how in summer the natives climb the mountains shod with shoes of ex-hide, their soles full of spikes to give them a hold upon the ice. Many of them are troglodytes [prehistoric people that lived in caves, dens, or holes], he adds, who, owing to the cold, dwell in holes. Some use poisoned arrows. Another writer says that some are cannibals—there is at any rate a consensus as to their ferocity.

No more inappropriate ethnological name was ever propounded than that of Caucasian for a fancied division of the human family, the cream of mankind, from which the civilized peoples of Europe are supposed to have sprung. For the Caucasus is today as it was in Strabo's time, full of races differing in religion, language, aspect, manners, character; races so numerous and still so little known that I shall not attempt to do more than mention some of the most important. Here in Daghestan many of the tribes occupy only one or two valleys, yet remain distinct in language and customs from their neighbors, and may probably remain so for centuries to come, an inexhaustible field for the ethnologist. Northwest of the Lesghians, towards Vladikavkaz, is the large Mohammedan tribe Tchetshens [Chechens], and beyond them the Ingushes, while southwest of Lesghistan, towards the Dariel Pass, dwell the Hessurs, or Chewsurs, a small people, who still array themselves in helmets and chain armor, carry shields and spears, and declare themselves descended from the Crusaders, though how Crusaders should have come there they do not explain. The truth seems to be that they wear, being nominally Christians, small crosses of red or black cloth sewed upon their clothes, and that some one, having been struck by the similarity of this to the Crusaders' usage, set the tale a-going. Still farther west, between the watershed and the Kuban, stretching far to the northwest of Elbruz lay Circassia, inhabited by tribes who called themselves Adighé, and whom the Russians knew as Tcherkesses. They were nearly all Mohammedans, though of rather a loose kind, admirable horsemen and marksmen, living by war and pillage, and leaving to their women such tillage as the character of the country permitted. The Muslim peoples of the Caucasus are held by most travelers to be superior in energy and uprightness to the Christians. In fact, their Christianity consists in kissing the cross, in feasting and idling on certain holidays, fasting on others, and in worshipping deities, some of whom go by the names of Christian saints. Their supposed chivalry, like most chivalries, disappeared upon close examination. They lived upon robbery and the sale of their children, and of the ferocity, which accompanies their robberies, they have given us hideous examples in Bulgaria, and still more recently in the Armenian campaign. Each man, like the Cyclopes in Homer, rules over his wife and children, and cares nothing for his neighbor. Except that the risk of being eaten or pierced by poisoned arrows is gone, the mountains are much in the same state as they were in the time of Herodotus [fifth century B.C.] and Strabo [c. 63 B.C. to A.D. 24].

The Narsan spring at Kislovodsk [is] strongly impregnated with carbonic acid as well as iron. This last discharges 190,000 cubic feet of gas in twenty-four hours, and is often resorted to as a sort of tonic by people who have gone through the regular course of sulphurous or alkaline waters. Like the famous spring of Bórszek, in Transylvania, which is used in the same way as an "after cure," it is quite cold (56° F.); and the physical pleasure of a plunge into its glittering waters, filled with the carbonic acid gas rising and breaking in great bubbles, is one of the most intense that can be conceived. It is like bathing in iced champagne. The Scotch colony [was] planted here in the time of Alexander I by missionaries sent to convert the Tcherkesses; the other a German colony, of somewhat later origin; all three laid out in straight lines, with trees running down their streets, and roads being made to connect them. They bore an almost ludicrous resemblance to those bird's-eye views of suburban estates or rising watering-places which one sees on the

advertisement boards of our railway stations, and suggested how little variety there is in the world after all. What amuses one most is that, in so apparently peaceful a place, everybody goes about fully armed. Nearly all the male visitors are in uniform. After you leave Rostof, all the guards on the train, the porters at the stations, the waiters at the hotels, seem in a state of constant preparation to resist a Circassian foray. The very boy who brings up your boots in the morning comes with daggers rattling in his belt, and a string of cartridge holders sewed to the breast of his coat. So it is all through the Caucasian countries. In fact, arms are as necessary a part of a man's dress as a hat; you are remarked, and in the wilder places, despised, if you do not wear them. Nobody has anything to do except play cards and smoke, the ladies joining freely in both amusements. English travelers are a puzzle altogether to the Muscovite mind.

A remarkable feature of this steppe is the great number of tumuli, which lie scattered over its surface, and which are supposed to be the burial mounds of primitive races. They are commonly called Kurgans, and are found associated with rudely hewn wooden figures exceeding life size. What with the gloomy weather and the gathering shades of night, we could distinguish nothing more than patches of white under the clouds, but the lower declivities seemed to be thickly wooded almost down to the level of the steppe. The line comes to an end at Vladikavkaz, more than a thousand miles from Moscow. At five next morning the sky was clear and bright, and, to our amazement, a snow-peak was looking in at the window, seeming to hang over the town. We were in the steppe, outside the mountains altogether, and here was an icy pinnacle, soaring into the air 14,000 feet above us, no farther off than Pilatus [Swiss Alp peak] looks from Luzern. It was Kazbek, the mountain where Prometheus hung in chains. Hither the ocean nymphs came to console him; over this desert to the north he wandered, driven by the gadfly of Hera.

We therefore thought ourselves fortunate in falling in with two Russian ladies bound for Tiflis, whose acquaintance we made in the train, and who, after a preliminary skirmish about English sympathy with Turkish cruelties, had proposed we should make up a party to hire a vehicle to carry us over the 126 miles of road to the southern capital. Afterwards they picked up, rather to our disgust, a fifth partner, a Circassian gentleman, also making for Tiflis. We had of course conceived of a Tcherkess as a gigantic warrior, armed to the teeth with helmet and shield and the unerring rifle, hating the Russian intruder, and ready to die for Islam. This Circassian, however, turned out to be an advocate practicing at Stavropol, and graduate of the university of Moscow—a short, swarthy man, who was, I believe, a Mohammedan, but never turned to Mecca all the time we were with him, and in other ways showed small regard for the precepts of the Prophet. Our vehicle went by the name of an omnibus, but was what we should call a covered waggonette, with a leather roof and leather curtains made to draw round the sides, no useless protection against the dust and sun. In a point of fact, few travelers do stop. The rule in Russia is to go straight ahead, by night as well as by day, eating at odd times, and dozing in your carriage when you can. One soon gets accustomed to that way of life, fresh air and excitement keeping any one who is in good health right enough so long as the journey lasts. The drawback is that you may happen to be uncontrollably drowsy just when you are passing through the finest bit of scenery. The scenery is like that of parts of the Bavarian Alps, only on a far grander scale. After a time the glen widens a little, and its character changes, for we leave the limestone, and come between mountains of slate or schist.

At the bottom of the gorge there is the furious torrent; on each side walls of granite rising (vertically, one would think, though I suppose they cannot be quite vertical) 4000 feet above it; behind are still loftier ranges of sharp, red pinnacles, broken, jagged, and terrible, their topmost summits flecked with snow, not a bush, or flower, or blade of green to relieve their bare sternness. This is the famous Dariel Pass, a scene whose grandeur is all the more striking because one comes so suddenly upon it after the exquisite beauty of the wooded limestone mountains farther down; a scene worthy of the historical associations which invest it, alone of all Caucasian glens, with an atmosphere of ancient romance. Virgil is renowned for nothing more than the singular felicity of the epithets with which he conveys a picture of a story in a single word; and the phrase, "duris cautibus horrens Caucasus," seemed so exactly to describe this spot that I was tempted to fancy he had in his mind, when he used it, some account by a Greek traveler who had wandered thus far. The mighty masses that hem in this ravine do literally bristle with sharp crags in a way that one does not see even in the aiguille ranges of Mont Blanc. The scene is more absolutely savage, if not more majestic, than any of the famous passes of the Alps or Norway. It is not merely the prodigious height and steepness of the mountains; it is their utter bareness and the fantastic wildness of their riven summits, towering 7000 or 8000 feet above the glen, that fill one with such a sense of terror and desolation. A stronger military post can hardly be imagined. Approaching it either way, the precipices seem to bar all further progress, and the eye seeks in vain to follow the road, which in one place passes by a tunnel behind a projecting mass of rock. For about a quarter of a mile the bottom of the gorge is filled by the foaming stream, so that it is only along the road that an army could advance. Half-a-dozen cannon could command the road, and a single explosion destroy it. I cannot but think that the Scythians who ravaged Upper Asia in the seventh century B.C., and the other nomad tribes which have from time to time penetrated from the north, must have come along the Caspian shore by Derbend; but that a whole people should have brought through their wagons and their flocks seems well-nigh impossible. Be that as it may, this is beyond question the site of the famous Caucasian or Iberian Gates. The walls of the Dariel gorge itself are of grey, large-grained granite; but one sees many other igneous rocks in the cliffs—porphyries, syenites, and basalts; about four miles above the fort a beautiful range of basaltic columns, much like those of the Giant's Causeway, runs along the steep mountain-side for some distance.

Some ten miles above the Dariel, and about twenty-seven from Vladikavkaz, the road, descending to the river, suddenly rounds a corner of rock, and with a start the traveler finds himself full in face of the magnificent Kazbek, a

steep dome of snow breaking down on the east in a grand black precipice. The top is 16,533 feet above the sea, and 11,000 feet above the little alpine plain or circular hollow in the mountains. All we could obtain by way of concession was an hour and a half to climb to a little church which stands perched on a height 1400 feet above the glen, and commands a noble view of Kazbek with his attendant peaks. The building interested us as the first specimen we had seen of Georgian or Armenian architecture; it was, indeed still is, a much visited place of pilgrimage, and seemed to date from the twelfth or thirteenth century. After waiting ten minutes, we were rewarded, about 4:30 P.M., by seeing them disperse under the strong breeze, and his glorious snowy crest came out against the intense blue of a sky whose clearness seemed to surpass even that of the Alps. We returned to the post-house punctually at the appointed hour, but were met by reproachful faces. "There are now no horses to be had; in your absence other travelers came up, and being ready to start, called for all that were in the stable; we could not retain them. There will be none fit for work now before tomorrow morning." Although secretly rejoiced to have a few more hours under the shadow of Kazbek, still, as politeness required, we dissembled our satisfaction, were forgiven, and prepared to spend the night at the uninviting post-house. We were welcomed by a young man with those soft handsome features which are so common among the Georgians, who turned out to be the Prince of Kazbek, a Georgian noble, who owns this part of the valley. He was entertaining two or three government employees sent from Tiflis to examine the glacier of Devdorak, which has several times formed a débâcle, behind which water accumulated in a lake which, breaking out at last, devastated the Terek valley. Among them was a young engineer from the Baltic provinces, speaking German, and an accomplished Armenian official, speaking both German and French, with whom we talked about the Caucasus to our heart's content, over endless glasses of lemon tea, while the great mountain glittered before us in the clear cold starlight. The scenery is more savage than beautiful; but if we had not seen the Dariel defile lower down, we should have thought it magnificent. Nothing can be more beautiful than the view in descending. To the northeast you look up into a wilderness of stern red mountains, their hollows filled with snow or ice, their sides strewn with huge loose blocks. These woods are really splendid, composed almost entirely of deciduous trees, beech, oak, hazel, birch, and such like, and so close as to look perfectly impenetrable. From here the road is pretty enough, but less interesting, and I relieved its tedium by a long talk with the ladies, who, it appeared, had done us the honor to take us for poets, because we seemed to admire the scenery, and I had been gathering plants. As we are both lawyers, and considered by our friends to be rather plain matter-of-fact people, this unexpected compliment flattered us not a little, and on the strength of it I indited a sonnet to the younger lady's cigarette, which was however, like its subject, of so evanescent a nature that it need not be reproduced here. Anxious to lie down and sleep, on the ground, in a post-house, anywhere, we heard with pleasure the conventional postmaster declare that no horses could be had before nine o'clock next morning; it was impossible, not a hoof in his stable, nor in any of the peasants' either. However, our companions, and especially the Circassian, who, I fancy, had a law-suit in Tiflis, were unwearied and inexorable. The Circassian barrister bullied the postmaster with so much vigour that horses were found forthwith, and in two hours more we were rattling over the stones of the capital of Transcaucasia, and on our first night in Asia were received by the drowsy but friendly servants of the Hôtel de l'Europe.

Chapter III

What I have got to say of particular parts of the country, such as Tiflis, the capital, and Armenia, is reserved for later chapters. Transcaucasia is a convenient general name for the countries lying between the Black Sea, the Caspian, and the Caucasus, which make up the dominions of the Czar in Western Asia, the chief of which are Georgia, which lies along the upper course of the Kur, south of the Caucasus; Armenia, farther south, on the Araxes, between Georgia, Persia, and Turkey; Imeritia, west of Georgia; and Mingrelia, west of Imeritia, along the eastern coast of the Black Sea. However, it is a convenient name, and before speaking of each of these countries by itself, something may be said of the general physical features of Transcaucasia as a whole. It may be broadly described as consisting of two mountain regions and two plains. First, all along the north, there are the slopes of the Caucasus, which on this side (at least in its western half, for towards the east the main chain sinks quite abruptly in to the levels of Kakhitia) sends off several lateral ranges descending far from the axis, and at last subsiding into a fertile and well-peopled hilly country. Secondly, on the south, over against the Caucasus, there is another mountain land, less elevated, but wider in extent, consisting of the chain which under various local names (some geographers have called it the Anti-Caucasus) runs from Lazistan at the southeast angle of the Black Sea away to the east and southeast till it meets the ranges of Persia. Towards the south, this chain ramifies all over Armenia, and here attains its greatest height in the volcanic summits of Ala Göz, 13,460 feet above the sea, while northward its spurs from a hilly country stretching to Tiflis. These two mountain masses are connected by a ridge which, branching off from the Caucasus between Elbruz and Kazbek, the two best known of all the summits of that chain, divides the waters of the Kur from those of the Rion (Phasis), and is crossed by the great road and railway from Tiflis to the Black Sea near the town of Suram. It is open, bare, and dry; is, in fact, what the Russians call steppe country, or the Americans prairie, through nearly its whole extent, and though the soil is fertile, much of it, especially towards the Caspian, is but thinly peopled or

cultivated. And as at this time the Caspian was also, no doubt, connected with the Sea of Aral (which is only some 160 feet above the present level of the Caspian, and about 80 above the ocean), one may say that the Mediterranean then extended through this chain of inland seas, far into Central Asia, perhaps to the sites of those cities, Khiva, Tashkend, and Bokhara. As one gets farther and farther to the east, beyond Tiflis, there is in autumn hardly a trace of vegetation either on plain or hills, except along the courses of the shrunken rivers and on the northern slopes of the mountains that divide the basins of the Kur and Aras. In these regions the winter is very severe, and the summer heats are tremendous. The explanation, of course, is that, while the moist westerly winds are arrested by the ridge at Suram, the eastern steppe lies open to the parching and bitter blasts which descend from Siberia and the frozen plains of Turkestan, while the scorching summers are not moderated by the influence of a neighboring sea, the Caspian being too small to make any great difference in the climate.

In Armenia the same causes operate, with the addition that, as a good deal of the country stands at a great height above the sea-level, the winters are in those parts long and terrible. At Alexandropol [Giumri, Armenia], for instance, the great Russian fortress over against Kars, where a large part of her army is always stationed, snow lies till the middle of April, spring lasts only about a fortnight, and during summer the country is parched like any desert. A result of this remarkable dryness of the climate, away from the Black Sea and its influences, is that the landscapes of Eastern Transcaucasia are bare, brown, and generally dreary. If there was ever wood on the lower grounds, it has been long since cut away, and probably could hardly be made to grow if now replanted. I must still remark that there is not much in Transcaucasia to attract the lover of natural beauty, except in two regions, the spurs of the Caucasus and the part of Armenia which lies round and commands a prospect of Mount Ararat. These are certainly considerable exceptions, for the scenery of each is quite unlike anything to be found in Europe. The luxuriant vegetation of the deep western valleys of the chain and the noble views of its tremendous snowy summits, streaming with glaciers, present pictures surpassing even those of the Italian valleys of the Alps—pictures that one must go to the Himalaya to find a parallel for. Ararat, again, an isolated volcanic cone rising 17,000 feet above the sea and 14,400 feet above the plain at its own base, is a phenomenon the like of which hardly exists in the world.

Whether beautiful or the reverse, however, the country is nearly everywhere rich, and might do wonders if it were filled by a larger, more energetic, and better educated population. There are only three millions of people in it now; it could easily support twenty. The steppe soil is generally extremely fertile, needing nothing but irrigation to produce heavy crops of grain. In some parts, especially along the Araxes, cotton is raised. Salt is abundant in Armenia, especially near Kulpi [Tuzluca], on the Upper Aras. Perhaps the most remarkable mineral product is naphtha [several highly volatile mixtures of petroleum, coal tar, or natural gas], which bursts forth in many places, but most profusely near Baku, on the coast of the Caspian, in strong springs, some of which are said to be always burning, while others, lying close to or even below the sea, will sometimes, in calm weather, discharge the spirit over the water, so that, when a light is applied, the sea takes fire, and blue flames flicker for miles over the surface. The place was greatly revered of old by the fire-worshippers, and after they were extirpated from Persia by the Mohammedans, who hate them bitterly, some few occasionally slunk here on pilgrimage. Now, under the more tolerant sway of the Czar, a solitary priest of fire is maintained by the Parsee community of Bombay, who inhabits a small temple built over one of the springs, and, like a vestal, tends the sacred flame by day and night.

If it is hard to give a general idea of a country so various in its physical aspects, it is even more so to describe its strangely mixed population. From the beginning of history, all sorts of tribes and races have lived in this isthmus between the Euxine and the Caspian, and though some of them may have now disappeared or been absorbed by others, new elements have pressed in from the north and east. Strabo, writing under Augustus [Roman Emperor], mentions four peoples as dwelling south of the Caucasus: the Colchians, along the Black Sea; the Iberians, farther to the east, beyond the cross ridge of Suram (which he calls an ἄρκων of the Caucasus); the Albanians, still farther eastward, in the plains along the Caspian Sea; and the Armenians, to the south of all these, in the country we still call Armenia. While these Soanes have been protected by their inaccessibility in the pathless recesses of the mountains, all trace of Colchians, Iberians, and Albanians, has long since passed away, and though Mingrelians now live where Jason found the Colchians, there is nothing to show that any of the blood of Aëtes and Medea flows in their degenerate veins. Russian ethnologists talk of a Karthalinian stock, to which Mingrelians, Imeritians, and Georgians, as well as some of the mountain tribes, are declared to belong.

Beginning from the west, we find the Mingrelians along the Black Sea coast, from the Turkish border to Sukhum Kaleh. They are the ne'er-do-wells of the Caucasian family. All their neighbors, however contemptible a Western may think them, have a bad word and a kick for the still more contemptible Mingrelian. To believe them, he is lazy, sensual, treacherous, and stupid, a liar and a thief. The strain in which the Russians and Armenians talk of them reminded me of the description one gets from the Transylvanian Saxons and Magyars of the Roumans who live among them. Lazy the Mingrelian certainly is, but in other respects I doubt if he is worse than his neighbors; and he lives in so damp and warm a climate that violent exercise must be disagreeable. South of Mingrelia lies Guria, on the slopes and ridges of the Anti-Caucasus, a land where the people are more vigorous and upright, and where, as they have been less affected by conquest and immigration, the picturesque old costumes have best maintained themselves. West of the Mingrelians, in the hilly regions of the Upper Rion and its tributaries, live the Imeritians, a race speaking a dialect of Georgian, who may generally be distinguished by their bushy hair.

Still farther east, and occupying the center of Transcaucasia, are the Georgians, called by the Russians Grusinians or Grusians, who may be considered the principal and, till the arrival of the Muscovite, the dominant race of the country. They call themselves Karthli, deducing their origin from a patriarch Karthlos (who was brother of Haik, the patriarch of the Armenian nation, and of Legis, the ancestor of the Lesghians), a grandson, or, as others hold, great-grandson of Gomer, son of Japheth. According to their own legends, they worshipped the sun and the moon and the five planets, and swore by the grave of Karthlos until converted to Christianity by St. Nina, in the fourth century of our era. For several centuries their kingdom extended almost to the Black Sea in one direction and the Caspian in another, and maintained itself with some credit against the hostility of Turks and Persians, though often wasted by Persian armies, and for long periods obliged to admit the suzerainty of the Shah. Its heroic age was the time of Queen Tamara, who flourished in the twelfth century, and is still honored by pictures all over the country, in which she appears as a beautiful Amazon, not unlike the fancy portraits of Joan of Arc. To her is ascribed the foundation of every ancient church or monastery, just as all the strongholds are said to have been built by the robber Kir Ogulu, and as in Scotland there is hardly an old mansion but shows Wallace's sword and Queen Mary's apartment. However, the *coup de grâce* was given by the invasion of the Persians, under Aga Mohammed Khan, in 1795, which reduced Georgia to such wretchedness that the reigning King George made over his dominions to Alexander I in 1799, and the country was finally occupied by Russian troops in 1802. One sees traces of a sort of feudal period in the numerous castles. The organization of society was feudal till quite lately, the peasantry serfs, the upper class landowning nobles and their dependants. It is a joke among the Russians that every Georgian is a noble; and as the only title of nobility is Prince, the effect to an English ear of hearing all sorts of obscure people, country postmasters, droshky drivers, sometimes even servants, described as being Prince So-and-so, is at first grotesque.

Everyone has heard of the Georgian beauties, who in the estimation of Turkish importers rivaled or surpassed those of Circassia itself. Among them a great many handsome and even some beautiful faces may certainly be seen, regular and finely chiseled features, a clear complexion, large and liquid eyes, an erect carriage, in which there is a good deal of dignity as well as of voluptuousness. To a taste, however, formed upon Western models, mere beauty of features and figure, without expression, is not very interesting; and these faces have seldom any expression. It must be remembered, however, that this loveliness is rather fleeting. Towards middle life the complexion is apt to become sallow, and the nose and chin rather too prominent, while the vacuity of look remains.

So early as the sixth century, Procopius compliments the Iberians (who are doubtless the ancestors of our Georgians) on their resolute adherence to Christian rites in spite of the attacks of the Persian fire-worshippers, who, it may be remarked in passing, seem to have been the first to set the example of religious persecution. The Muslims say that the Christianity of the Georgians is owing to their fondness for wine and for pork, both which good things, as everybody knows, the Prophet has forbidden to true believers. They belong, of course, to the Orthodox Eastern Church, and are now in full communion with the Church of Russia, of which indeed they may be said to have become a branch, though their liturgy differs a little in some points. During the earlier Middle Ages I suspect that they were more influenced by heterodox Armenia than by Constantinople, though they separated from the Armenian Church in the end of the sixth century, when the latter finally anathematized the Council of Chalcedon. Their ecclesiastical alphabet, for they have two, is taken from the Armenian. Of their number it is difficult to form an estimate; it can hardly exceed 500,000 souls, and may be considerably less.

Scattered through Upper Georgia, and to be found among the peasantry as well as in the towns, there is a considerable Armenian population, who probably settled here when their national kingdom was destroyed by the Seljukian conquerors, Alp Arslan and Malek Shah, in the eleventh century. Farther south, in Armenia proper, they constitute the bulk of the population in the country districts, Kurds being mixed with them in the mountains, Tatars in the plains, and Persians in the towns. As I shall have something to say of them in a later chapter, it is unnecessary to describe them at present, further than to remark that they are the most vigorous and intelligent of the Transcaucasian races, with a gift for trade which has enabled them to get most of the large business of the country into their hands. Their total number in these countries is estimated at 550,000.

Going down the Kur from Tiflis towards the Caspian, one finds the Georgians give place to a people whom the Russians call Tatars, and who are unquestionably a branch of the great Turkic family. When or how they settled here, no one can precisely tell, but it seems likely the earliest immigration was from the north, along the Caspian coast. There is no doubt that the Emperor Heraclius, in his long war with Persia in the middle of the seventh century, called in to his aid the Khazars, a Scythian tribe, from the Caspian steppe north of Derbend. Probably these Khazars were the first Turks who settled on this side of the mountains; but many others must have come in afterwards from the southeast at the time of the great Seljukian conquests in the eleventh century. Their villages, often mere burrows in the dry soil, are scattered all over the steppe eastward to the Caspian, and southward as far as the Persian frontier. Many are agricultural, many more live by their sheep and cattle, which in summer are driven up towards the Armenian mountains and in winter return to the steppe.

The Tatars are also the general carriers of the country. On the few roads, or oftener upon the open steppe, one sees their endless trains of carts, and more rarely their strings of camels, fetching goods from Shemakha, or Baku, or Tavriz [Tabriz, Iran], to Tiflis, thence to be dispatched over the Dariel into Southern Russia, or by railway to Poti and Western Europe. The last of their occupations, the one in which they most excel, and which they have almost to themselves, is brigandage. If we had believed a quarter part of what the quidnuncs of Tiflis told us, we should have

thought the country seriously disturbed, and traveling, especially by night, full of peril. Stories were always being brought into the city, and even appearing in the papers, of robberies, sometimes of murders, committed on the roads to Elizavetpol and Erivan; and along the latter road, we found the folk at the post stations with imaginations ready to see a Tatar behind every bush. Even the Russian officials at Tiflis, who of course desired to make little of anything that reflects on the vigilance of the government, advised us to be careful where we halted, and how we displayed any valuables. I cannot help believing, therefore, that robberies do sometimes occur, and no doubt it is the Tatars, or at least a band led by a Tatar chief, who perpetrate them. But the substantial danger is not really more than sufficient to give a little piquancy to traveling, and make you fondle your pistols with the air of a man who feels himself prepared for an emergency. In a dull country, far removed from the interest and movements of the Western world, the pleasure of life is sensibly increased when people have got the exploits of robbers to talk about. It is a subject level with the meanest imagination; the idle Georgian noble and the ignorant peasant enjoy it as heartily as Walter Scott himself.

Whatever truth there is in such stories as these, they show that way in which the country people regard the robbers, and explain why brigandage still holds its ground against the efforts of the government. Some people give another reason, and say that the inferior officials do not care to put it down, but take a share of the spoils, and sometimes, when they have caught a notable robber, release him for a good round ransom which his friends will always pay. This I believe to be a calumny, though of course such a thing may have occurred once and again; the chief difficulty in the way of putting down brigandage is the vicinity of the Persian and Turkish dominions, into which marauders can easily escape, and whence the bands are constantly recruited by all sorts of adventurous spirits, who have lived under a government so bad that lawlessness seems justified.

Besides these four nations, and the Armenians who live scattered among them, there are plenty of Persians in Transcaucasia, especially towards the southwest angle of the Caspian [Azerbaijan], and on the Aras, beyond Erivan, a region which Russia acquired from Persia only in 1828. Some of the Tatars, like the Osmanli Turks and the Turkmans, are Sunni Mohammedans, the Persians are Shiah, who reject and abominate the three first Khalifs and honor Ali almost as much as the Prophet himself. Here, however, they live peaceably enough together. The Tatar is mostly tall and robust, with a round face, rather prominent cheekbones, a short nose, and small eyes. The Persian is slim, lithe, stealthy and cat-like in his movements; his face is long, of a clear yellowish tint, his eyes dark and rather large, nose aquiline, eyebrows delicately arched. The Tatar is inclined to be open; he is faithful to his word, and more inclined to force than to fraud; the Persian has the name of being the greatest liar in the East. "In Iran no man believes another" has become in these countries almost a proverb. With these moral disadvantages, the Persians are no doubt in many ways a superior race, industrious and polished even in the dregs of their civilization, after centuries of tyranny and misgovernment. But modern Persia, from all that one can hear, is more execrably misgoverned than Turkey itself. The duty of the governor of a province or town is simply to squeeze as much money as he can out of the inhabitants; his methods are the bastinado, impalement, crucifixion, burying up to the neck in the ground, and similar tortures. Still more distinct are the Germans, of whom there are several colonies, the largest, established in Tiflis, numbering some four or five thousand souls. They came hither from Würtemberg about sixty years ago, driven out by an obnoxious hymn-book. In respect of education and intelligence, they are of course far above any of the natives, while their Protestantism prevents them from intermarrying with, and therefore from sensibly affecting, their Russian neighbors. They have lost, if they ever possessed, the impulse of progress; their own farms are the best in the country, and their handicraftsmen in Tiflis superior to the Georgians or Persians; but they are content to go on in their old ways, not spreading out from the community, not teaching or in any way stimulating the rest of the population.

All these races live together, not merely within the limits of the same country, a country politically and physically one, but to a great extent actually on the same soil, mixed up with and crossing one another. This phenomenon—so strange to one who knows only the homogeneous population of West European countries, or of a country like America, where all sorts of elements are day by day being flung into the melting-pot, and lose their identity almost at once—comes out most noticeably in the capital of Transcaucasia, the city of Tiflis. Here six nations dwell together in a town smaller than Brighton, and six languages are constantly, three or four more occasionally, to be heard in the streets. Varieties of dress, religion, manners, and physical aspect correspond to these diversities of race. The traveler's or interpreter's *lingua franca* of Eastern and Southern Transcaucasia and the Caucasus generally is what the Russians call Tartar (or rather Tatar), but what we should call Turkish. Though Russia does not interfere with Islam, and has the prudence to respect the Armenian Church, she is hostile to both Roman Catholic and Protestant missions, and does her best to advance her own church in every way.

Agriculture is much what it may have been five centuries ago, witness the implements used. The plough is a ruder contrivance than that which Hesiod describes; no wonder that a large team is needed to drag it through the hard dry earth. Just outside the houses of Tiflis I have seen no less than sixteen oxen yoked to a single plough. Her peasants, except some sects of dissenters who have been deported hither by the Czars, have not crossed the mountains to colonize, nor are they the sort of colonists that change the face of a country as Americans do. They are uneducated, attached to their old ways, unreceptive of new ideas even in a new land. It is Eastern—Eastern not only in the dry, bare glowing landscape (I speak chiefly of the Caspian basin), but in the look of the villages, the bazaars, the agriculture, the sense of immobility. Seeing the ancient churches and castles, most of which have some legend attached to them (though such legends are as seldom poetical as they are trustworthy), one has an odd sort of sense of being in a country which has had a history, but a history that never emerged from twilight, which nobody knows, and

which is perhaps hardly worth the knowing. In Eastern Russia and Siberia you acquiesce in the fact that there never was any history; the past is a blank, and must remain so. In Asia Minor, on the other hand, you are within the circle of Greek and Roman civilization; everybody, from Herodotus downwards, has something to tell of its cities and peoples. But Georgia, and the regions immediately round it, have been always the frontier land of light and darkness, a battlefield of hostile empires and religions; first of the Roman empire and the Persians, then of Christianity and fire-worship, then of Christianity and Islam, then of Persians and Turks, lastly of Russia against both the Sultan and the Shah. One finds traces in the buildings and the art of the people of all these influences—of the Greek traders who frequented the markets of the Euxine; of the Byzantine emperors, who held sometimes more, sometimes less of the country, Justinian having pushed forward his garrisons as far as the Upper Kur and Heraclius as far down as Tavriz; of the Genoese, who monopolized the Black Sea trade in the later days of Byzantine rule, and had their settlements all round its coasts; of the Persians and Armenians, who came as conquerors or immigrants. There is a wonderful harvest awaiting the archaeologist here, and the laborers are still few.

The Russians, as being the rulers and the most civilized, might be expected to be able to effect this, but it must be remembered that they are not very numerous, consisting only of the upper officials, of the soldiers, who are a transitory element in the population, and of some isolated settlements of dissenting peasants. Moreover, they are not thoroughly civilized themselves, and cannot impart what they have not got. Civilization in Russia is like a coat of paint over unseasoned wood; you may not at first detect the unsoundness of the material, but test it, and it fails. The Persians hate all Turks worse than they hate Christians, and may even, to the extent of their very limited power, side with Russia in the quarrel. The Tatars are a simple folk of shepherds, carriers, highwaymen, with no sense of the "solidarity of the Turkish race," and no desire to draw the sword against the infidel. The Armenian peasantry of the Araxes valley seem to live much in the same way as their Tatar neighbors; their villages are little better, nor are they less illiterate. But one never hears of intermarriages nor any sort of rapprochement between them. Among the Christians themselves, the separate existence and strongly national character of the Armenian Church keeps its children apart not only from Protestant Germans, but from those who own the Orthodox Eastern faith. And it is really only where such a religious repulsion does not exist, as, for instance, between Russians and Georgians, that any social amalgamation goes on. There is no unity among these races, no common national feeling to appeal to, nothing on which a national kingdom could be based. Nothing, in fact, keeps them together but the Russian army and administration, and the loyalty of both these to the Czar is that which keeps Russia herself together, rising as it does almost to the dignity of a national worship.

Chapter IV

Tiflis is intolerably hot and close in summer. Add to this that the water is scarce and indifferent, and the dust truly Oriental, and it is easy to understand that summer is not the time to enjoy the Transcaucasian capital. So in summer, pretty nearly every one who can afford it, and can get free from his official duties, makes off to the hills. The court, that is to say, the Grand Duke, who is the sun of this system, and his attendant planets, the adjutants, go to Borjom, a charming spot among wooded mountains eighty miles to the west-northwest. In Tiflis, each of the principal trades has a street or streets, or a covered arcade in the bazaar, entirely to itself: thus in one street you find the dealers in arms, in a second the leather-sellers, in a third the jewelers, in a fourth the carpet merchants, in a fifth the furriers, on whose walls hang the skins of Caucasian bears and Hyrcanian tigers. The value of the old silver goods is well known; it is little use hoping for a bargain where so many Russian buyers are about, and where the sellers are mostly Armenian. The Germans have their own schools, far better than any which Russian organization produces; they are nearly all Protestants, with a wholesome Protestant contempt for their superstitious Georgian and Armenian neighbors. When there meets you a keener or more restless glance, you may be sure that it comes from an Armenian eye. The Armenians are a large and apparently an increasing element of the population, easily known by their swarthy complexion and peculiar physiognomy. They are the most vigorous and pushing people in the country, and have got most of its trade into their hands, not only the shop-keeping, but the larger mercantile concerns.

Tiflis, whose native name, Tbilisi, is said to be derived from a Georgian word meaning hot, and to refer to the warm springs, is a place of some historical note. Tradition says that the first fort was erected here by a lieutenant of the Sassanid kings of Persia in A.D. 380, and that at it, seventy-five years later, the reigning monarch of Georgia, Vaktang Gurgaslan, founded a city, to which, in the beginning of the following century, his son Datchi transferred the seat of government, attracted by the hot sulphurous baths. Compared, however, to the antiquity of the former capital, Mtskheth (twelve miles to the northwest), which was founded by a great-great-great-grandson of Noah, Tiflis appears a settlement of yesterday.

Kajori is but a small place as yet, though with the growth of Tiflis it is likely to increase, and we visited only one other person there, General Chodzko (Khodzko), the distinguished engineer officer who in 1850 led a surveying party up Ararat. From him and his secretary, Mr. Scharoyan, I received a valuable suggestion for the climb, which we were thinking of trying, viz [namely] to keep to the rocks rather than trust the snow, and many injunctions on no account to ascend alone. In the evening we returned to Tiflis, fortified with all the recommendations that could be desired to convey us along the road into Armenia, for which, on the next day but one, we started accordingly.

Chapter V

Let me premise that the term "Russian Armenia," which it is often convenient to use, does not denote any political division. Armenia is merely a popular historical name for the countries, which at one time or another formed part of the old Armenian kingdom. Two kinds of vehicle are used here, as in the Russian empire generally, for the conveyance of passengers—the telega and the tarantass. A telega is simply a small four-wheeled square or oblong cart, usually with sides, which give it the air of a box upon wheels, but sometimes without sides, a mere flat piece of board, on the edge of which you sit, letting your legs dangle over. Of its capacities, or incapacities, for comfort, I shall speak later on. The tarantass is in shape more like a large Norwegian carriage, but with four wheels: it is a seat, placed in the center of a longish pole, which again is set on the axles of the wheels. This gives it a sort of elasticity; in fact, the pole acts as a spring, just as in the American vehicle called a buckboard.

I had better explain what the Russians mean by the term *steppe*, which is one of those a traveler comes to use so familiarly as to forget that it is not ordinary English. The *steppe* is not necessarily flat land, for the country north of the Sea of Azof for instance, is rolling; nor low country, for some of the so-called *steppes* beyond the Caspian are on lofty table-lands. Nor is it barren; on the contrary, some parts are extremely fertile. It is simply open, treeless land, whether covered with grass, or with weeds, or with dwarf, thorny bushes, or only with stones and sand. Here, in the valleys of the Kur and Aras, there is but little of the pure desert *steppe*, though the rainfall sinks sometimes to four or five inches a year; but on the other side of the Caspian, in the plateau of Ust Urt and the parts of Turkestan that lie south of the Aral Sea, desert is the rule, and a bit of cultivable land, with a spring or pond, the rare exception. Along the road we were traversing the *steppe* land is comparatively narrow. On the north one sees a long line of low wooded hills, outliers of and hiding the great range of the Eastern Caucasus in Daghestan; to the southwest other hills, bare, brown, and lumpy, rise up towards the edge of the Armenian plateau. Once in six or seven miles we pass a Tatar burying ground, a dismal group of stones stuck erect, though most have now fallen over, in the bare *steppe*, with no enclosure round them nor any sign of care. Not far from the cemetery you discover, with some difficulty, groups of low, round-topped, earthen hovels, some like an English pigsty, some mere burrows in the clay, with no windows, and only a hole for a door. These huts are all deserted; the Tatars who inhabit them during winter have now driven their flocks up into the hills on the Armenian border to seek fresh pasture, and will not return till the approach of winter. Silent and dreary as the *steppe* is, there is plenty of traffic along the road: strings of carts laden with merchandise, vehicles with merchants or officials, solitary riders, all armed to the teeth, with two or three daggers, and perhaps pistols also, stuck in their belt, and an extraordinary old gun of the matchlock type slung over their shoulder. At first we bowed or touched our hats to these wayfarers, whereat they seemed surprised, and did not return the compliment. Our companion solemnly warned us to salute no more, saying we should be taken for strangers ignorant of the ways of the country, and likely to be rich men; and that even if none of those we met were thievishly inclined, they might say something about us—probably a disagreeable something—to other people along the road who would be ready for mischief. In fact, the presumption here seems to be *omnis ignotus pro periculoso*; and instead of civility you do well to scowl at those you meet, and let them see that you too are armed.

This piece of country between Tiflis and Erivan [Yerevan] is said to be the chief seat of Transcaucasian brigandage, and many are the tales one hears about it. Some, which have a slightly romantic, Robin Hood sort of flavor, I have given in an earlier chapter: I will add two others, which may be more historical. Only two or three years ago, the governor of Erivan, who had been making efforts to clear his government of these plagues, was encountered on a journey by a troop of gully fifty brigands. Their leader rode forward, and pointed out to his Excellency that the escort of twenty Cossacks who accompanied him need not attempt to resist the superior numbers of the band. The governor admitted the justice of this view, and surrendered, upon which they took from him his favorite horse, and sent him on his way lamenting. A few weeks later, the horse was returned, with a message from the chief that he had no wish to injure the governor, and desired that nothing should interrupt their friendly relations, "I took your horse only as a lesson to you not to interfere with my people as you have lately been doing: see that you do not repeat that mistake." Here, some twenty-five miles from Tiflis, a considerable stream comes down from the Armenian mountains on the right to join the Kur, and winds along the precipitous face of some low, bare hills that bound its valley on the south. Along the road, at intervals of a few miles in the more hilly parts, there are placed little wooden scaffoldings, some fifteen feet high, with a ladder giving access to a small platform, where a *tchapar* or Cossack is set to keep a look-out over the adjoining slopes, and summon his comrades from the nearest station if he sees any suspicious characters about. We saw nobody aloft in any of these look-outs as we passed, and supposed from this, and from what people told us at the Red Bridge, that the road was safe at present. However, at the next station, which we reached about 9 o'clock P.M., the air was full of stories of "bad people," Tatars of course, who had been seen hanging about; and we were besought not to go on by a pompous postmaster, who warned us that, as we were recommended to his care by the government, we owed it to him to be prudent, and that he would not be answerable for the results if we proceeded further that night. Whether there was really any risk, it was impossible for us to tell, but, anyhow, it was clear that there would be considerable difficulty in getting horses; so on our companion's advice we halted till about 4 A.M., "making ourselves comfortable" in the one room which the post-house provided. This process consisted in spreading out on the dirty floor

a small Shemakha rug, which we had bought in Tiflis, and lying down upon it with a pair of boots for a pillow. Nothing could be prettier, or less like the country we had just left. Bare reddish mountain tops rose nearly 4000 feet above us, and 6000 or 7000 feet above the sea; their densely wooded sides descending steeply into the valley, along whose narrow but level floor the clear stream rippled along in little runs and pools, where surely trout must play, the sunlight breaking through the bushes on its sparkling shallows. Delijan itself, which lies scattered up and down the steep hillside, at a point where two glens meet, is inhabited partly by Armenians, partly by Molokans, a sect of Russian Dissenters who have been deported hither by the Czars. They are said to have neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper, nor any regular clergy; and at their religious meetings follow up the singing and the extempore prayers, which constitute the service with an odd sort of dance, and kissings all round. They cling to all their old Russian habits, marry only among themselves, and build their cottages of wood, so that one easily distinguishes their settlements from those of Armenians or Tatars, even before seeing their beards and characteristically Russian physiognomy.

From Delijan, which we left at seven o'clock in the evening, the well engineered road mounts steeply through a superbly wooded glen, whose beauties, however, we lost in the darkness. It was midnight before we reached the post-house at the top of the pass, where we halted in the hope of a little sleep, having had none to speak of the night before. Sleep, however, was out of the question. It was bitterly cold, for we were at a height of 7000 feet above the sea, the room was small, and foul beyond description, and the stony floor one had to lie down upon swarmed—here, however, let a veil be dropped. Memory called up many a disagreeable night—nights in rock-holes on the Alps, nights under canvas amid Icelandic snow-storms, nights in Transylvanian forests, nights in coasting streamers off the shores of Spain, nights in railway waiting-rooms in England, but no night so horrible as this. Descending under the opening eyelids of the dawn from the pass, which lies among green and rounded hills, we were refreshed by the sight of a magnificent inland sea stretching away fifty miles to the southward, surrounded by high volcanic hills, all absolutely bare of trees, and in most places even of grass, but with a few small patches of snow lying here and there in their upper hollows. It was the lake which the Russians call Goktcha (a corruption of the Tatar name, which means blue lake), and the natives Sevan, the Lychnitis of the ancients; and we were now fairly in Armenia. Unlike the two other great lakes of that country, that of Van in the Turkish dominions and that of Urumia in the Persian, its waters are fresh and it discharges by a small river, the Zenga, into the Aras. The mountains round it are all of volcanic origin, and rise some 4000 to 5000 feet above its surface, which is over 5870 feet above the sea. A great part of it freezes in winter. The beach, at the place where I bathed, was composed of large volcanic pebbles, glued together by and incrustated with a thick calcareous deposit, which forms all around the shores a white line, marking the difference between the summer and winter level of the water. The only village we could descry lies just opposite the only island, whereon is the ancient and famous Armenian monastery of Sevan or Sevanga. Even the Armenian fathers of the little monastery in the lake, which at one time claimed to be the seat of the Patriarch of the Armenian Church, own with a sigh that the age of miracles is past.

Hamlets lie scattered in the glens, and here and there woods of dwarf oak hang on the steep sides of the glens, giving the landscape a softer and more cheerful look than this part of Armenia generally has. At the top of the long, steep slope down which the village of Daratchitchak meanders stand three curious old churches, built of huge blocks of a reddish volcanic stone. The two larger of them have been partly destroyed in some of the numerous Tatar irruptions; but the smallest is entire, covered, like all Armenian churches, by a high polygonal cupola, and has a pretty little portico, whose doorway is divided into two by a miniature, elegantly carved, Romanesque column, supporting two slightly pointed arches, a charming piece of work, which reminded us of Western forms more than anything we had yet seen in these countries.

The vice-governor and his wife courteously welcomed us. He smiled when we asked, through the lady, who acted as interpreter, about Ararat, told us that it had never been really ascended, though several travelers professed to have got up, and evidently thought the enterprise hopeless. Ala Göz consists of three sharp, rocky peaks, apparently parts of the rim of an ancient crater, rising out of an immense swelling upland some forty miles in circumference. The peaks, one of which is said to be inaccessible, and certainly looks as though it might afford nice bits of climbing, are too abrupt to bear snow, but we afterwards saw patches of white in the bottom of the extinct crater between them. It is even said that there is a small glacier there; I cannot think, however, the snow is sufficient in quantity to feed one. Ala Göz is a curious instance of the untrustworthiness of one's impressions about the height of mountains. After Ararat, it is the loftiest summit between the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf, 13,436 feet above the sea, as high as the Schreckhorn or Piz Bernina. If we had judged by our eyes, we should have put it down at 9000 feet. I have never seen so high a hill look so inconsiderable, so perfectly mean and trivial. It is true that the point whence we first caught sight of it was 5000 feet above the sea; but afterwards, looking at it from the plain of the Aras, and from the top of Ararat, it seemed no higher, owing, no doubt, to the gentleness of its lower slopes and to the way one miscalculates distance in this clear, dry atmosphere.

It is a bare and dreary country, like all the interior of Armenia, perfectly brown, and apparently almost waterless; but the volcanic soil is very rich, and would support a population far larger than that which now occupies it. Everything is primitive to the last degree: there was not even a morsel of food, nor a drop of vodka. Every post-house, however simple, possesses a *samovar*, a huge brazen urn with a cylinder in the middle, into which the charcoal is put to boil the water. As soon as you enter the station, you call for the samovar; in fifteen or twenty minutes the hot water is ready. Then you put in the tea, slice down the lemons, and tumble in the sugar, which articles you have, of course, brought

with you, and in five minutes all your wretchedness is forgotten. Tea is the universal beverage of these countries, just as coffee is of the Levant and the Mediterranean generally; it is drunk by Armenians, Persians, Tatars, Turkmans, Kalmucks, Mongols, Tibetans, in fact, by the whole of Northern and Central Asia, all the way to China, just as much as by the Russians themselves.

Erivan, the capital of Russian Armenia, which next morning stood basking in a sun what made it dangerous to go out except under an umbrella, is a thoroughly Eastern town, with just a little Russian varnish in one or two of its streets. It is Eastern of the Persian type, which is very different from the Arab Orientalism of Cairo or Tangier, or the half French, half Osmanli Orientalism of Stamboul. Many of the houses, especially in the outskirts, open off narrow lanes between high mud walls, and are surrounded by groves and vineyards. There are no shops, for all the buying and selling goes on in the bazaar, a complex of long straight brick arcades, in which the dealers and handicraftsmen sit upon divans behind their wares, sipping tea, or smoking gout of their *kallians*, or long flexible water pipes, and scarcely condescend to answer you when you ask the price of an article. Each trade has an arcade or two itself; the bakers are in one, the fruit-sellers in a second, the shoemakers in a third; in a fourth, carpets; in a fifth, leather goods, and so forth. Persians, Tatars, and Armenians are all represented, the last being decidedly more anxious to do business than the other two. The bazaar begins to be crowded about 5 A.M., and thins off in the forenoon, reviving a little in the quarters where food is sold towards the time of the evening meal. In front of it lies the great *Meidan*, a sort of square or open space, where the road to Persia meets the road to Tiflis and Europe. Men in sheepskin hats, shuffling along in their loose, low-heeled slippers, and women covered from head to foot with a blue checked robe, are flocking hither to buy food from every part of the city, and clustering like bees round the stalls which bakers and fruit-sellers have set up here and there through the Meidan, and where heaps of huge green and golden melons, plums, apples, and above all, grapes of the richest hue and flavor, lie piled up. Hard by stand the rude country carts or pack-horses that have brought the fruit, with the Armenian peasant in his loose grey cotton frock; while strings of camels from Persia or the Caspian coast file in, led by sturdy Tatars, daggers stuck in their belts, an old matchlock slung behind, and a huge sheepskin cap overshadowing the whole body. Sometimes a swarthy, fierce-eyed Kurd from the mountains appears; sometimes a slim and stealthy son of Iran, with his tall black hat and yellow robe. It is a perfectly Eastern scene, just such as any city beyond the frontiers would present, save that in Persia one would see men crucified along the wall, and both there and in Turkey might hear the shrieks of wretches writhing under the bastinado. One forgets Russia till a mounted Cossack is seen galloping past with dispatches for Alexandropol, where the Grand Duke, attended by the governor of Erivan, is now holding a great review. It is just such a scene as Ararat, whose snowy cone rises behind in incomparable majesty, may have looked down upon any day for these three thousand years. As noon approaches, the babbling rills of life that flow hither and thither in the bazaar are stilled; the heat has sent every one home to slumber, or at least to rest and shade; the fruit-sellers have moved their stalls, the peasants have returned to the country; Ararat, too, has hid his silvery head in a mantle of clouds. Only the impatient Western traveler braves the arrows of the sun, and tries to worry his Armenian driver into a start across the scorching plain.

The population of Erivan is greatly mixed, and, of course, no one knows the proportions of the various elements. Till 1827, when Paskievitch captured it, and won for himself the title of Erivanski, it belonged to Persia, and a good many Persians still remain in it, fully a quarter of the whole number of inhabitants. Nearly as many more may be Tatars, less than a half Armenians; the balance consists of Russian officials and troops, with a few Greeks and other nondescript foreigners, including, of course, several Germans. Go where you will in the world, as a friend said to me who has traversed nearly every part of it, you will always find a German; they are more ubiquitous than the English themselves. Life flows on in the old channels, little affected either by Russian conquests or by the reviving hopes of the Armenian nation. Like most towns in a country, which has been so often the theatre of destructive wars, it has few antiquities, though it claims to have been founded by Noah, and appeals to its name, which in Armenian is said to mean "the Apparent," as evidence that it was the first dry land the patriarch saw. Another tradition goes still further back, holding that it was Noah's dwelling before the Flood took place. Be this as it may, it has now no sights to show except the mosques and the ancient palace of the Shah, or rather of his lieutenant, the Sardar of Erivan.

The most trivial details of Eastern life are fascinating to those whose childish imagination has been fed by the Bible and the Arabian Nights. To see people sitting or sleeping on the flat roofs, or talking to one another in the gate through which a string of camels is passing, to visit mosques and minarets and bazaars, watch the beggar crawl into the ruined tomb of a Muslim saint, and ramble through a grove of cypresses strewn with nameless, half fallen gravestones, to stand by the baker or the shoemaker as he plies his craft in his open stall, and listen to the stories told by the barber, even when one does not understand a word, with the sacred mountain of the Ark looking down upon all, this seems like a delightful dream from far-off years, and one wakes with a start to perceive that it is all real, and that in the midst of it stands an unsympathetic Frank, unable to rid himself of a sense of mingled contempt and pity for the "natives," anxious to examine what he has come so far to see, and then press on to something further. One considers how long it would take to tame down a restless Western spirit to the apathy, the acquiesciveness, the sense of boundless time before and around which these people have been steeped in for so many generations.

With the end of our pilgrimage full in sight, and the moon, on whose light we must depend for night marches, waning fast, we had no wish to linger in Erivan, especially as the letters we bore enabled us to get horses without trouble or delay. Both in Tiflis and all the way along from Tiflis to Erivan, we had about Mount Ararat, the side from which to approach it, the modes or chances of ascending it. Little, however, could be learned except that the point we

must make for was the frontier military station of Aralykh [Aralik, Turkey], lying on the right (western) bank of the Araxes,¹ about twenty-five miles from Erivan. Accordingly, on the morning of September the 9th, we drove off from Erivan under the blazing noon, having purchased and stowed away in the tarantass a good stock of bread, tea, and delicious grapes, grapes well worthy to have grown on Noah's vine. The road combined in a singular manner two apparently incompatible evils, roughness and softness. It was strewn with rocks, over which we jolted with a violence that obliged one to hold on for fear of being thrown out; it was deep in dust, which rose round us in blinding clouds. Cultivation did not appear till we began to approach the Araxes, where not only is the soil deeper, but tiny canals from the river or the few tributary streams, which it receives from the left, diffuse fertility.

This Araxes plain is much the richest part of Armenia, being both hot and well watered, while the rest of the country is high, cold, and dry. It is, in fact, a country of lofty open plateaus separated by ranges of bare mountains; the plateaus 5000 to 7000 feet, the mountains 8000 to 12,000 feet above the sea. The climate is therefore mostly a rigorous one, running into violent extremes of winter cold, and unrelieved in summer by the sheltering or moistening influence of forests. The plateaus I have mentioned, like that on which Erzerum stands, are covered with snow till April, the passes of the mountains much later; and of course little but corn and other distinctively northern crops can be raised on them. But this great valley of the Araxes which intersects the mountain land is here only 2700 feet above the sea, and as the latitude is that of Seville or Baltimore, one is not surprised to find the heat overpowering even in September, and to see fields of cotton and tobacco bordering the road. A prettier crop than cotton makes it would be hard to name, with its yellow flowers, abundant low leafage and pods snowy white as they burst. Lines of lofty poplars sometimes enclose the road, and give a temporary defense against the sun for which we are duly grateful, though they hide Ararat, on which we had been keeping our eyes fixed since morning, hoping that the clouds which were shifting themselves uneasily round his top would part sufficiently to let us have a glimpse of it. The vineyards, loaded with purple fruit, would have been too great a temptation to men so hot and thirsty but that they were enclosed by high walls of mud, with a sort of crow's nest on a scaffolding in the center, where a peasant was perched to watch for and scare away depredators.

In the villages we passed, the houses were all of clay, which looked as if it could scarcely resist a moderately energetic thunderstorm; their walls spotted with lumps of mud which have been stuck on wet where the original structure had begun to show holes or chinks. An Armenian house gets renewed in this fashion like an Irishman's coat, till there is none of the first fabric left. These houses are usually built at the side of or round a small courtyard, enclosed by a high mud wall with one door in it; round two or three sides of the yard the rooms are placed, which have no apertures for light—one can hardly say windows—except into the yard, and little or no furniture. In some the cattle are housed with the family; those of a better sort have a byre on the other side of the yard, distinct from the living rooms, and sometimes many such small subsidiary erections. The interior is dark, and with scarcely any furniture, perhaps a low stool or tow, and a rough carpet or piece of matting to sit or sleep upon. In summer life goes on chiefly upon the flat roofs, also of clay, where the men sit smoking or eating melons, and where, or else in the gardens, they sleep at night. These villages in the middle of the fields, surrounded by vineyards and by groves of the elæagnus, with its handsome brown fruit, and apricot or willow, are mostly inhabited by Armenians, who labor on the soil, getting water from the Araxes by a multitude of channels that run hither and thither through the tilled land. Of the Tatars many are shepherds, accustomed in summer to wander up to the hills with their flocks; some, however, have permanent dwellings in the plain, and do a little husbandry. Their hamlets are generally even ruder and meaner than the Armenian, and their way of life more repulsive. When communications have to be made, Tatar is the medium, not only because it is the *lingua franca* of all these countries, but because the Armenians, who are quick at languages, learn it far more readily than the Tatars do Armenian. A good deal of traffic goes on along this road, which is the only highway from Tavriz, the chief commercial city of Northern Persia, to Erivan and Russia generally.

After five hours' driving from Erivan, and changing horses twice, we suddenly turned to the right off the post-road, with its double line of telegraph wires, and, passing through some thickets, emerged on to a long stretch of open ground, marked here and there with wheel tracks, across which we came in two or three miles to the banks of the

¹ Aras is, I believe, the Persian form of the name, Arax the Russian; but it is quite as well known under the ancient name Araxes, which is at least as old as Herodotus. He, however, confounds our river with the Volga and the Oxus.

Aras. Things have not changed much here in the last nineteen hundred years. The Araxes—*pontem indignatus Araxes*—is spanned by no bridge all down its course, and all who wonder how to cross its historic flood must swim, or wade, or ferry. Wondering how we were to get over, we looked with some concern as well as admiration at the wide stream, as wide as the Thames at London Bridge, that swept along between banks of clay which rose ten or twelve feet above the present level of the water, but which in winter are no doubt often covered. The driver, however, promptly ran his horses down the bank and plunged in; when to our astonishment the stream turned out to be only two feet deep. The water, the muddiness of which had prevented us from seeing how shallow it was, scarcely rose to the horses' knees, and did not come into the bottom of our low tarantass; though its flow was so rapid that fording may be pretty dangerous after heavy rains above. On our way back, some days afterwards, we crossed in a ferry-boat stationed a little lower down, which is worked by a rope, and I had then the pleasure of a plunge into this famous river, whose water is not cold enough to do the most exhausted bather any harm. It seemed to have a fuller current than the Kur at Tiflis, yet a wonderfully scanty one, considering the length of its course; this, of course, is easily explained by the great dryness of the country it drains.

Passing through a crowd of picturesque Kurds who had been driving their cattle through by the same ford, and envying the big grayish-white buffaloes which were cooling themselves in the water, we crossed a tract intersected by numerous channels drawn from the river for irrigation, bordered with tall reeds, and enclosing fields of rice, already reaped, and cotton whose pods were just bursting with white fluff. In the reedy marshes, which these channels feed, there is abundance of wild hogs. They come out at night, and ravage the rice-fields of the Tatars; and as the Mohammedan scruples of the latter prevent them from touching, and practically therefore from hunting down, this unclean animal, the hogs have a fine time of it. At the Russian station of Aralykh, there is always kept a detachment of Cossacks, and the colonel in command is the chief military authority over the skirts of the two Ararats, charged to guard the frontier and look after the predatory bands that are said to hang about it. The summit of Little Ararat is the meeting-post of the Russian, Persian, and Turkish empires, and every one knows that border lands have been from time immemorial the haunts of dangerous or turbulent characters, since they can find an easy escape from the jurisdiction against which they have offended into another that knows nothing about them. The mountains are inhabited only by a few wandering Kurds. It will appear in the sequel that we saw, with our own eyes, no trace whatever of banditti. But as the colonel, who was a very sensible man, particularly begged us not to ramble more than a mile from the station, offering an escort if we wished to go farther, one could not but suppose there must really be some hidden dangers in these apparently deserted slopes. Robbers have for many generations been made an excuse for not exploring the mountain to find the Ark. In hearing about this, we were often reminded of the lines in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*—

“Such a traveler told you his last news,
He saw the Ark a-top of Ararat;
But did not climb there since 'twas getting late,
And robber bands infest the mountain's foot.”

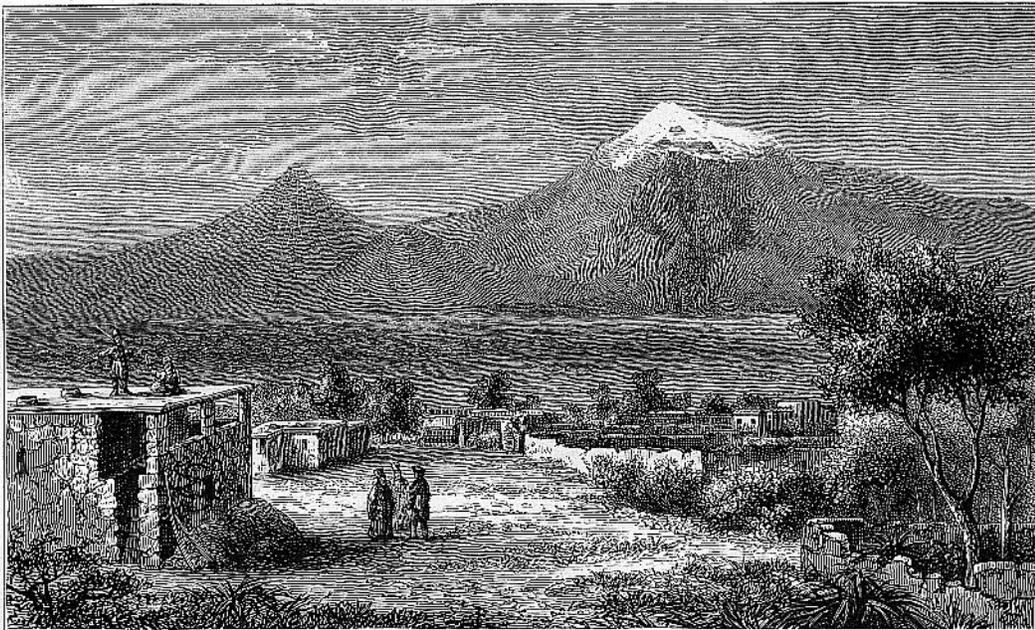
Aralykh is not fortified, for there is no attack to be expected from these wretched banditti, whoever they are, nor does Russia appear to fancy an invasion from Turkey or Persia likely enough to be worth guarding against. It is merely a row of wooden barracks, neatly painted, with a smith's and carpenter's shop, cottages for the army followers, and so forth, scattered round it, and a few trees, giving a little shade in summer and shelter from the violent winter winds. The situation is striking. It is exactly on the line where the last slope of Ararat, an extremely gentle slope of not more than two or three degrees in inclination, melts into the perfectly flat bottom of the Aras valley. Looking up this slope, the mountain seems quite close, though in reality its true base, that is, the point where the ground begins to rise sharply, is fully four hours (twelve miles) distant. On this its north-eastern side, one looks right into the great black chasm [Ahora Gorge], and sees, topping the cliffs that surround that chasm, a cornice of ice 300 or 400 feet in thickness [Cehennem Dere with Abich I ice cliff], lying at a height of about 14,000 feet, and above, a steep slope of snow, pierced here and there by rocks running up to the summit. A little to the west of south, and about seventeen miles distant, rises the singularly elegant peak of Little Ararat, appearing from this point as a regular slightly truncated cone, which in the autumn is free from snow. In the plain, and only a few miles off to the southwest, a low rocky eminence is seen, close to the famous monastery of Khorvirab, where St. Gregory the Illuminator, the apostle of Armenia, was for fourteen years confined in a dry well by his cousin, King Tiridates. So at least says the Armenian Church. The very ancient ruins on it are sometimes taken to be the site of the famous city of Artaxata, which, according to Strabo, was build for King Artaxias (who, revolting from Antiochus the Great, founded an Armenian kingdom) by Hannibal, after he had left Antiochus, and before he sought his last refuge with Prusias of Bithynia. Others place Artaxata nearer to Erivan on the river Medzamor, and at some distance from the present bed of the Araxes, which, according to Tacitus (Ann. Xiii. 41) flowed under the walls of Artaxata. It was one of the two capitals of Digran or Tigranes, the great Armenian conqueror, and captured by Lucullus, when, after defeating Mithridates of Pontus, he carried the Roman arms against Tigranes, the son-in-law and ally of the latter, into these remote regions, which even Alexander had not entered. A century and a half later it was again taken and razed to the ground by Corbulo, one of the generals of Nero, and was subsequently

rebuilt by Tiridates, a protégé of Nero's, under the name of Neronia. When, about A.D. 370, it was again taken and burnt by the Persians, it is said to have contained a population of 200,000 total, 40,000 of them Jews.

At Aralykh we were received with the utmost courtesy by the officer in command, Colonel Temirhan Aktolovitch Shipshef, a Mohammedan noble from the Kabarda, on the north side of the Caucasus, and a man of many and varied accomplishments. At night, it was terribly hot, for we were enjoined to keep the windows shut to avoid the fever-producing miasma from the adjoining marshes. Even our concentrated solution of carbolic acid, though it was strong enough to burn a hole in my forehead, did not wholly repel the mosquitoes whom these marshes rear. Concerning Ararat we had much discourse, the upshot of which was that nobody at Aralykh knew anything of former ascents, nor of how it ought to be attacked, but that we should have horses and Cossacks to take us to Sardarbulakh [Serdabulak in later times], a small military outpost high up on the way which leads over the pass between Great and Little Ararat to Bayazid, and as much farther as horses or Cossacks could go. A day, however, was needed to make preparations, and while these went forward, we got the heads and spikes of our ice-axes fitted with shafts by a German carpenter attached to the station, and rambled out under umbrellas over the slope that rose almost imperceptibly to the southeast, an hour's walking on which seemed to bring us no nearer to the mountain. It was an arid waste of white volcanic ash or sand, covered with prickly shrubs, among which lizards and black scorpions wriggle about. We ought, of course, to have gone—any energetic traveler would have gone—to examine the ruins of Artaxata, but the overpowering heat and the weariness of the last few days and sleepless nights, which began to tell as soon as we began to rest, made us too languid even for so obvious a duty. So we dawdled, and panted, and dozed, and watched the clouds shift and break and form again round the solemn snowy cone till another evening descended and it glittered clear and cold beneath the stars.

Chapter VI

None of the native peoples that behold from the surrounding plains and valleys the silvery crest of Ararat know it by that name. The Armenians call it Massis, or Massis Ljarn (*ljarn* meaning "mountain"), a name which we may connect with the Masius of Strabo (though his description of that mountain does not suit ours); the Tatars and Turks, Aghri Dagh [Agri Dagi], which is interpreted as meaning "curved mountain," or "painful mountain"; the Persians, Koh i Nuh, "the mountain of Noah," or, according to Sir John Chardin, Sahat Toppin, which he interprets to mean "the Happy Hillock." It has received among geographers the name of Ararat, which the Russian use is now beginning to spread in the neighborhood, and which the ecclesiastics at Etchmiadzin have taken as the title of a monthly magazine they publish, only from its identification with the Biblical mountain of the Ark, an identification whose history is curious.



GREAT AND LITTLE ARARAT FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

The only topographical reference in the Scripture narrative of the Flood is to be found in the words, Genesis viii, 4,—“In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month,” “the Ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat,” which may be taken as equivalent to “on a mountain of (or in) Ararat.” The word Ararat is used in three, or rather two, other places in Scripture. One is in 2 Kings xix. 37, and the parallel passage in Isaiah xxxvii. 38, where it is said of the sons of Sennacherib, who had just murdered their father, that “they escaped into the land of Ararat,” rendered in our

version, and in the Septuagint, "Armenia." The other is in Jeremiah li. 27, "Call together against her" (i.e. Babylon) "the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz." The question then is, what does this Ararat denote? Clearly the Alexandrian translators took it for Armenia; so does the Vulgate when it renders in Genesis viii. 4 the words which we translate, "on the mountains of Ararat," by "super montes Armeniae." This narrows it a little, and St. Jerome himself helps us to narrow it still further when, in his commentary on Isaiah xxxvii. 38, he says that "Ararat means the plain of the middle Araxes, which lies at the foot of the great mountain Taurus." Besides, Moses of Chorene, the well-known Armenian historian of the fifth century, speaks of a province or district he calls Ajrarat, lying on the Araxes, and which some have tried to identify with the name of the Alarodians in Herodotus. Now as our modern Mount Ararat, Aghri Dagh, is by far the highest and most conspicuous mountain of that region, no one who looked at it, already knowing the story of the Flood, could doubt that it was the first part of the dry land to appear as the waters dried up, so much does it rise above all its neighbors.

The identification, therefore, is natural enough: what it is of more consequence to determine is how early it took place; for as there is little or no trace of an independent local tradition of the Flood, we may assume the identification to rest entirely on the use of the name Ararat in the Hebrew narrative. Josephus says that the Armenians called the place where Noah descended the disembarking place (*ἀποβατήριον*), "for the Ark being saved in that place, its remains are shown there by the inhabitants to this day," and also quotes Nicolas of Damascus, who writes that "in Armenia, above Minyas, there is a great mountain called Baris (is this word the Armenian Masis?), upon which it is said that many who escaped at the time of the Flood were saved, and that one who was carried in an Ark came ashore on the top of it, and that the remains of the wood were preserved for a long while. This might be the man about whom Moses, the law-giver of the Jews, wrote." This *ἀποβατήριον* has usually been identified with the town of Nakhitchevan (called by Ptolemy Naxuana), which stands on the Araxes, about thirty-five miles southeast from our mountain, and whose name the modern Armenians explain as meaning "he descended first," which would seem to show that in the first century of our era—and how much sooner we cannot say—the Armenians living round the mountain believed it to be the Ark mountain. They might have heard of the Bible narrative from Jews, who were already beginning to be scattered through these countries (there is a story that some of those carried away by Shalmanezar were settled in Armenia and Georgia); they might know the Chaldaean legend of the Flood, which was preserved by Berossus, to whom Josephus so often refers, and a version of which has been found on clay tablets in the ruins of Nineveh and deciphered by the late Mr. George Smith. The curious thing is that this Chaldee legend fixed the spot of Noah's landing in a quite different region, although one which was sometimes included in the wide and loose name Armenia, viz. in the mountain land (called by the Jews Qardu) which rises to the east of the Upper Tigris, that is, northeast of Nineveh and Mosul, in the direction of Urumia. This country was called in ancient times Gordyene, a name which appears in the Hebrew Qardu, and in our modern name Kurds, as well as in the Karduchi of Xenophon. As its mountains, although far less lofty than our modern Ararat, are of great height, and visible far away into the Assyrian plain (Mr. Layard saw Aghri Dagh from the summit of one of them), it was natural for the inhabitants of that plain to assume that they were the highest on earth, which the Deluge would be the last to cover, and where the vessel of safety would come to land. The Jews also, probably at the time of the Captivity, took up this notion, and it became the dominant one among them, is frequently given in the Talmud, and by Josephus himself, in a passage where he mentions that in the country of Adiabene, and in the district of Carrae (others read "of the Cardii" = Kurds), there were preserved the remains of the Ark. Probably he thought that the disembarking place mentioned in the beginning of his treatise was here, for he quotes Berossus as stating that it was among the Kurds, who in those days are not mentioned so far north as they wander now. Berossus' words are, "It is said that there is still some part of this ship in Armenia at the mountain of the Cordyaeans (*πρὸς τῷ ὄρει τῷ Κορδυσίῳ*), and that some people carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they take away and use chiefly as amulets for the averting of mischief." But probably Josephus' ideas of the geography of these regions were vague enough, and he may not have known that from the land of Ajrarat, on the middle Araxes, to Gordyene is more than 200 miles. From the Jews, this idea that Gordyene was the Biblical spot passed to the Syrian Church, and became the prevailing view throughout the Christian East, as it still is among the Nestorians, who dwell hard by. It passed also to the Muslims; and Gudi, the mountain where the Ark rested according to the Koran, is usually placed by them in the same Kurdish land, near the spot where there seems to have stood for several centuries (it was burnt in A.D. 655, but may have been rebuilt later) a convent to which tradition pointed as the guardian of the sacred fragments. Those who assume, as many Oriental scholars do, that the original tradition of the Flood is to be found in Assyria, naturally prefer this latter identification, since the mountains of Southern Kurdistan, the Qardu land, are quite high enough to satisfy the narrative, and must have been always familiar to the Chaldees, whereas the Araxes valley lies far away to the north, and the fact that its summits are really loftier would in those times be little known or regarded. Without the aid of our modern scientific appliances, men's ideas of relative height are even vaguer and less capable of verification than their ideas of distance. On the other hand, the view which holds the Ararat of the Bible to lie in Northern Armenia, near the Araxes, can appeal not only to the undoubted fact that there was in that region the province called Ajrarat, but also to the reference to a "kingdom of Ararat" in Jeremiah li. 27, which could hardly apply to Gordyene. And one does not see why the Old Testament writers, whose geographical knowledge was in some points a good deal wider than is commonly assumed, should not have heard of the very lofty summits that lie in this part of Armenia. Full liberty is therefore left to the traveler to believe our Ararat, the snowy sovereign of the Araxes plain, to be the true Ararat, and

certainly no one who had ever seen it rising in solitary majesty far above all its attendant peaks could doubt that its summit must have first pierced the receding waves.

The modern Armenian tradition of course goes for nothing in settling the question, for that tradition cannot be shown to be older than our own era, and is easily accounted for by the use of the word Ararat in the book of Genesis, which the Armenians, when Jews or Christians came among them, would of course identify with their Ajrarat. Once established, the tradition held its ground, and budded out into many fantastic legends, some of them still lingering in Armenia, some only known to us by the notices of passing medieval travelers. Marco Polo, whose route does not seem to have led him near it, says only, in speaking of Armenia:—"Here is an exceeding great mountain: on which it is said the Ark of Noah rested, and for this cause it is called the mountain of the Ark of Noah. The circuit of its base cannot be traversed in less than two days; and the ascent is rendered impossible by the snow on its summit, which never dissolves, but is increased by each successive fall. On the lower declivities the melted snows cause an abundant vegetation, and afford rich pastures for the cattle which in summer resort thither from all the surrounding countries." But the Franciscan friar, William of Rubruk, who, in 1254, a little before Marco Polo's time, had on his return from Karakorum passed under Ararat, says that here upon the higher of two great mountains above the river Araxes the Ark rested, which mountain cannot be ascended, though the earnest prayers of a pious monk prevailed so far that a piece of the wood of the Ark was brought to him by an angel, which piece is still preserved in a church near by as a holy relic. He gives Massis as the name of this mountain, and adds that it is the mother of the world: "super Massis nullus debet ascendere quia est mater mundi."

Sir John Maundeville, of pious and veracious memory, has also a good deal to tell us. After speaking of Trapazond (Trebizond), and stating that from there "men go to Ermony (Armenia) the Great unto a cytee [city] that is clept [called] Artyroun (Erzerum), that was won't to ben [been] a gode [good] cytee and a plentyous, but the Turkes han gretly wasted it," he proceeds:—"Fro Artyroun go men to an Hille that is clept [called] Sabisocolle. And there besyde is another Hille that men clepen [called] Ararathe: but the Jews clepen it Taneez, where Noes Schipp [Ship] rested: and zit is upon that Montayne: and men may see it a ferr in cleer wedre: and that Montayne is well a 7 Myle high. And sum men seyn that they have seen and touched the Schipp; and put here Fyngres in the parties where the Feend went out whan that Noe seyde '*Benedicite*.'" But thei that seyn such Wordes seyn here Wille, for a man may not gon up the Montayne for gret plentee of Snow that is alle weyes on that Montayne nouthur Sommer ne Winter; so that no man may gon up there: ne nevere man did, sith the tyme of Noe: saf a Monk that be the grace of God broughte on of the Planes down, that zit is in the Mynstre at the foot of the Montayne. And besyde is the Cytee of Dayne that Noe founded. And faste by is the Cytee of Any [Ani], in the whiche were 1000 churches. But upon that Montayne to gon up this Monk had gret desir; and so upon a day he wente up and whan he was upward the 3 part of the Montayne he was so wery that he myghte no ferthere, and so he rested him and felle to slepe; and whan he awoke he fonde himself liggynge at the foot of the Montayne. And then he preyed devoutly to God that he wolde vouche saf to suffre him gon up. And an Angelle cam to him and seyde that he scholde gon up; and so he did. And sith that tyme never non. Wherefore men scholde [should] not beleeve such Woordes [Words]."

This laudable skepticism of Sir John's prevailed, for it has long been almost an article of faith with the Armenian Church that the top of Ararat is inaccessible. Even the legend of the monk, which, as we find from Friar William, is as old as the thirteenth century, is usually given in a form, which confirms still further the sacredness of the mountain. St. Jacob (Hagop), as the monk is named, was consumed by a pious desire to reach and venerate the holy Ark, which could in seasons of fair weather be descried from beneath, and three several times he essayed to climb the steep and rocky slopes. Each time, after reaching a great height, he fell into a deep sleep, and, when he woke, found himself at the foot of the mountain. After the third time, an angel appeared to him while he still lay in slumber, and told him that God had forbidden mortal foot ever to tread the sacred summit or touch the vessel in which mankind had been preserved, but that on him, in reward for his devout perseverance, there should be bestowed a fragment of its wood. This fragment he placed on the sleeper's breast, and vanished; it is that which is still preserved in the treasury at Etchmiadzin, or, as others say, in the monastery of Kjeghart; and the saint is commemorated by the little monastery of St. Jacob, which stands, or rather stood till 1840, on the slopes of Ararat, above the valley of Arghuri, the spot of the angel's appearing. Every succeeding traveler has repeated this tale, with variations due to his informant or his own imagination: so, though the reader has probably heard it, I dare not break through a custom so long established. Among these repeaters is Sir John Chardin, who traveled through Armenia and Persia towards the end of the seventeenth century, and whose remarks upon it are as follows. They show the progress which criticism had been making since the days of the earlier Sir John.

"This is the Tale that they tell, upon which I shall observe 2 Things. First, that it has no coherence with the relations of ancient authors as Josephus, Berosus, or Nicolaus of Damascus, who assure us that the Remains of the Ark were to be seen, and that the people took the Pitch with which it was besmeared as an Antidote against Several Distempers. The second, that whereas it is taken for a Miracle that no Body can get up to the Top: I should rather take it for a greater Miracle that any Man should climb up so high. For the Mountain is altogether uninhabited, and from the Halfway to the Top of all, perpetually covered with Snow that never melts, so that all the Seasons of the Year it appears to be a prodigious heap of nothing but Snow."

Whether Chardin himself believed the Ark to be still on the top of the mountain, does not appear. In two views of it which he gives, showing also Erivan and Etchmiadzin, the Ark appears, in shape exactly the Ark of the nursery on

Sunday afternoons, poised on the summit of Great Ararat. But this may be merely emblematic; indeed I have not found any author who says he has himself seen it, though plenty who (like the retellers of ghost stories) mention other people who have.

Religious fancy has connected many places in the neighborhood with the Biblical narrative. Not to speak of the sites which have been suggested in the Araxes valley for the Garden of Eden, the name of Arghuri [Ahoru or Turkish Yenidoğan] itself is derived from two Armenian words which mean, "he planted the vine"; it is taken to be the spot where Noah planted that first vineyard which is mentioned in Genesis ix. 20; and till 1840, when the village was overwhelmed by a tremendous fall of rocks, shaken down by the great earthquake of that year, an ancient vine stock, still bearing grapes, was pointed out as that which had been planted by the patriarch's hands. The town of Marand [in Iran, 2003], the Marunda of Ptolemy (in Armenian = "the mother is there"), is said to be called after the wife of Noah, who there died and was buried; and (as has been mentioned already) the name of another still considerable town, Nakhitchevan, in the Araxes valley, is explained to mean, "he descended first," and has therefore been identified with the *ἀποβατήριον* of Josephus aforesaid. There too was shown, perhaps is still shown, the tomb of Noah. Modern historians and geographers have been hardly less fanciful than Armenian monks; some derive the Tatar name Aghri or Arghi Dagh from the word Arca. Some imagine a relation between this and the Argo; others connect the word *baris* (mentioned above as an ancient name for the mountain) with a supposed Oriental word meaning "boat" (see Herodotus, ii.96), or with the Armenian *baris* (= exit); in fine, there is no end to the whimsical speculations that attach themselves to the mountain. What is certain is that the word Ararat, though it is a genuine old Armenian name for a district, and is derived by Moses of Chorene from *Arai jarat*, "the fall of Arai," a mythical Armenian king slain in battle with Semiramis, has never been the name by which those who lived round the mountain have known it, albeit it is found in the Armenian version of the Bible just as in our own.

Of the other legends that cluster round the mountain, I shall mention only two. One of them connects it with the so-called Chaldaean worship of the stars, and affirm that upon it stood a pillar with a figure of a star; and that before the birth of Christ twelve wise men were stationed by this pillar to watch for the appearing of the star in the east, which three of them followed, when it appeared, to Bethlehem. The other, of a very different kind, relates to a spring, which bursts forth on the side of the Great Chasm, above the spot where the convent of St. Jacob stood. There is a bird called by the Armenians *tetagush*, which pursues and feeds on the locusts whose swarms are such a plague to this country. Now, the water of this sacred spring possesses the property of attracting the tetagush, and when the locusts appear, the first thing to be done is to fetch a bottle of it, and set it on the ground near them, taking care not to let it touch the ground upon its way. The bird immediately appears; the locusts are devoured, and the crops are saved. It is a pity the Canadians have no tetagush to set at their destroying beetle.

Before finally quitting the realm of fancy for that of fact, I will repeat an observation by which more than one orographer of distinction, struck by the remarkable geographical position, which Ararat occupies, has suggested a sort of justification for the Armenian view that it is the center of the earth. It stands in the center of the longest line of the old continent, stretching from the Cape of Good Hope to Behring Straits. It is also in the line of the great deserts and of the great inland seas from Gibraltar to Lake Baikal, that is, in a line of almost continuous depressions. It is almost exactly equidistant from the Black Sea, the Caspian, and the northern end of the great Mesopotamian plain, which at no distant period was probably also part of the ocean bed.

Taking the two Ararats together, they form an elliptical mass of about twenty-five miles in length from northwest to southeast, and about half that width. This mass rises on the north and east out of the alluvial plain of the Aras, whose height is here from 2800 to 2500 feet above the sea, and on the southwest sinks into the valley or rather plateau of Bayazid [Doğubeyazit], which lies between 4000 and 5000 feet above sea-level, and also discharges its waters towards the Aras. It is therefore quite isolated on all sides but the northwest, where a depression or col about 7000 feet high connects it with a long ridge of volcanic mountains, which, under the names of Pambak, Synak Dagh, and Parly Dagh, runs away to the westward between the basins of the Aras and Murad Su (Eastern Euphrates), and connects itself south of Erzerum with the great range of the Bingöl Dagh, or northeastern Taurus, as well as with the southern offsets of the Anti-Caucasus. Over against it to the north, nearly forty miles away, rise the three volcanic pinnacles, fragments of a broken crater rim, of Ala Göz (13,436 feet); to the east, beyond the wide valley of the Aras, is the great plateau of the Kara Bagh, some of whose highest volcanic tops exceed 11,000 feet, while on the south, beyond Bayazid and the Upper Euphrates, ranges nearly equally lofty run away down towards the Lake of Van in the south and the Lake of Urumia in the southeast. Orographically and geologically, Ararat is connected with all these, but the plain immediately around it is wide enough to give it that air of standing quite alone which so greatly contributes to its grandeur, and speaks so clearly of its volcanic origin.

Out of the great elliptical mass I have described rise two peaks, their bases confluent at a height of 8800 feet, their summits about seven miles apart. The higher, Great Ararat, is 17,000 [16,945 or 5137 meters] feet above the sea-level, the lower, Little Ararat, 12,840 feet [12782 feet or 3896 meters]. They are very similar in geological structure, but sufficiently dissimilar in appearance, like the sisters in Virgil—"Facies non omnibus una, Nee diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum"—to enhance the effect of one another. For while Little Ararat is an elegant cone or pyramid, rising with steep, smooth, regular sides into a comparatively sharp peak, Great Ararat is a huge, broad-shouldered mass, more of a dome than a cone, supported by strong buttresses, and throwing out rough ribs or ridges of rock that stand out like knotty muscles from its solid trunk. The greatest length of this dome is from northwest to

southeast. Towards the northeast, that is, on one of its long sides, it descends very abruptly towards the Aras plain, forming in places ranges of magnificent black precipice, capped with ice-beds many hundreds of feet in thickness, and pierced by a profound glen or chasm. On the opposite or southwest side the fall is somewhat less rapid; towards the southeast, where the peak faces Little Ararat, it is steep indeed, but in most parts not precipitous (this is the side up which I ascended); while towards the northwest the declivity is longer and more gentle, a succession of terraces, separated by moderately difficult slopes, falling away into an immense fan-shaped base, which spreads far into the Araxes plain. This is, therefore the side on which occur the only considerable fields of snow or rather *névé* (the others being too abrupt for much snow to lie), and it was by advancing over them that Parrot [1829 ascent] effected the first ascent of the mountain. The upper slopes, where not snow-covered, are extremely rough and broken, seamed by gullies, the larger of which are no doubt volcanic fissures, the smaller probably produced by winter storms, rising here and there into lofty towers and ridges of rock, and strewn with prodigious masses of loose stone, broken by the weather into wildly fantastic shapes. All this part, above 10,000 or 11,000 feet, is almost wholly bare of vegetation. The middle part of the declivity is somewhat less rugged, and the lowest slopes of all, by which the mass subsides into the plain, are singularly smooth and uniform. On the northeast side these basal slopes, as I may call them, are two. First comes one which rises from the Aras marshes at an angle of about $2\frac{1}{2}$ degrees for some six miles, and then another, which rises for, say, four miles, at an angle of $4\frac{1}{2}$ degrees. After this second, the steep part of the mountain begins. Its average angle on the northwest declivity is about 17 degrees, on the southeast 25 to 30 degrees.

Both peaks are entirely composed of igneous rock, and there is no question that they belong to what may be called the grand volcanic system of Northwestern Asia, the main lines of whose action are indicated in a general way by the direction of the chief mountain chains, such direction being supposed to correspond to axes of elevation, or, as it is sometimes expressed, to lines of fissure. Along these lines of fissure, continuously or at intervals, the igneous masses forming the highest part of such chains were from time to time ejected. One such line, or perhaps more than one, is represented by the Caucasus, where, besides the granitic mountains on the axis, there are several comparatively modern volcanic summits, such as Elbruz, Kazbek, and Basarjusi. Another line of elevation, marked by volcanic outbursts, appears in the northeastern ranges of Taurus; and in the range dividing the upper valleys of the Kur and Aras. Still nearer to Ararat, the great mass of Ala Göz, on the north, and the continuation of that mass to the east and southeast in the mountains that surround the Goktcha lake, are all volcanic, composed chiefly of trachyte rock. The valley of the Aras itself is filled by recent alluvial deposits, out of which rise isolated palæozoic hills composed of carboniferous limestone or Devonian strata, which appear again farther to the south, in the hills through which the Aras takes its way to Nakhitchevan and the Persian border; while farther to the south and west, newer sedimentary rocks range southwards, pierced here and there by the volcanic outbursts which reach as far as Lake Van.

The only geologist of eminence who has carefully examined Ararat is Hermann Abich [1845 expedition with Armenian guide and engineer/officer General Chodzko [Khodzko] from the Georgian capital of Tiflis [later Tbilisi]], now one of the patriarchs of the science; and probably the best thing I can do is to abridge his view of its structure and history, so far as I can gather it from the various papers, which he has contributed, to different scientific journals. He holds the inner and original part of the mass to be composed of trachyte and trachytic tuffs, poured out at a comparatively early period in dome-shaped hills, three of which, placed along a line of fissure running nearly northwest and southeast, were Little Ararat, Great Ararat, and the rounded plateau called, from a small pond or pool upon it (*ghöll* = lake, in Tatar), Kip Ghöll, which lies about four miles northwest by west of the top of Great Ararat. The eruptive forces which raised these hills having, after an interval of quiescence, resumed their activity in comparatively recent times, probably in what we call the pleiocene age, violent splitting and bursting of the trachytic rocks went on, mainly along the old lines of fissure, and vast quantities of lava of a doleritic or basaltic character were poured out from various points along these fissures. The pressing-up from beneath of the edges of the fissures gave to the summits of both Great and Little Ararat their present form; no eruptions taking place from the actual tops, although some of the fissure-vents which discharged streams of doleritic lava were not far below these summits, while a number of minor cones were raised and craters formed along the sides of the mountain, especially to the southeast of Great Ararat, and on Kip Ghöll, where several large and well-marked crateriform hollows may be still made out. Along with this splitting, there went on a process of elevation, by which the southern edge of one huge cleft was raised to be the present summit of Great Ararat, while its other side remained at, or sank to, a much lower level; other rifts were also formed at right angles to the principal axis, one of which was the origin of the remarkable chasm on the northeast side of the mountain, which bears much similarity to the famous Val del Bove on Etna. Its present shape and dimensions—it is nearly 9000 feet deep, and surrounded by monstrous precipices—are probably, like those of the Sicilian valley, due to subsequent erosion; but there may well have been eruptions from it in some earlier stage. A somewhat similar, but smaller, chasm penetrates deep into the mountain on the opposite or southwestern side.

According to this theory, there never was a great central crater at the summit of either Great or Little Ararat. The forms of those two peaks are due to the elevating and rending forces which, operating on pre-existing trachytic masses, squeezed up the edges of the clefts they opened into comparatively sharp points, while prodigious and long-continued eruptions sometimes from these clefts, sometimes from cones of eruption built up round the principal orifices along their line, increased the external volume of the mountain, and in the case of Great Ararat turned it from a comparatively sharp cone, similar to Little Ararat, into the broad-shouldered, grandly buttressed mass which it now

presents. Unlike these two loftier summits, Kip Ghöll would appear to approach more nearly the normal type of a modern volcano, having been built up, not so much by a general upheaval, as by external accretion from the lava, scoriæ, and ashes, ejected from its craters; and the gentler inclination of the northern slope of the peak of Great Ararat would be accounted for by the fact that behind Kip Ghöll to the southeast, in the direction of that peak, there were other similar craters which filled up the depression between it and Kip Ghöll, and gave to the northwest face of the mountain its present appearance of a series of descending terraces. Subsequent denudation continued through many thousands, or millions, of years, and that process of decay and leveling which all mountains undergo has worn down the inequalities of the sides, has given to Little Ararat its figure of a wonderfully regular pyramidal cone, has filled up some and scooped out others of the fissures on Great Ararat until the former seem to be merely shallow troughs running down the mountain face, while the latter are profound gorges such as the great chasm, has obliterated many of the lateral craters by breaking down their rims and raising the level of their bottoms.

To criticize this theory, which perhaps retains too much of the old upheaval doctrines of von Buch and Élie de Beaumont to be altogether acceptable to British geologists, would require far wider geological knowledge than I possess, as well as a more careful study of Ararat itself than I had time for. The existence, however, of the great fissures to which Herr Abich attributes so much is unquestionable; one in particular, on the southeast side of the mountain, runs down for many thousand feet, bordered by lofty cliffs of black or reddish porphyritic trachyte, and has every appearance of having discharged currents of lava. I can also confirm what he says as to the absence of any trace of a crater on the summit of Great Ararat. The top (which I shall describe in the following chapter) forms a small undulating plateau of snow, with two rounded heights or bosses rising out of it; there is no appearance of a circular hollow, and although the cap of *névé* is thick enough to obscure in some degree the structure of the rocky ground beneath, it could hardly have its present form if there really lay underneath it sharp cliffs surrounding a basin, such as are seen in most volcanoes. Nothing, for instance, could be less like the snowy summit of Hekla, where there is a beautiful crater almost surrounded by an *arête*, than is the top of Ararat. Similarly, the top of Little Ararat is nearly flat, with many vast blocks and masses of rock on it, but no central depression, no rim of cliffs. It would, however, be rash to infer from the absence of a crater now that none ever existed on these summits, for many volcanoes might be cited whose central crater has been almost or even quite obliterated, though the general structure of the mountain enables us to conclude its former existence. It may therefore be that on Great Ararat the crater had been, at the time when volcanic action through its chimney ceased, almost filled up within by the ejection of solid matter from that chimney, so that the crateral form had almost disappeared. Or, again, it is possible that, in the immense period that has elapsed since the last eruption from the summits, the sides of the crateral basin which then existed have been completely broken down by decay, the destructive action of the atmosphere being doubly powerful at this prodigious height, where frosts and storms are constantly raging. Or, lastly, the summits, as we now see it, may be the remains of one side of a large crater, the other sides having been destroyed by some paroxysmal eruption, as the one side of Somma, the ancient Vesuvius, was destroyed in the tremendous outburst of A.D. 72.

Supposing that there once existed a central vent of eruption, opening at the top of Ararat, it would be in the usual order of volcanic phenomena for this main vent, whose presence had determined the height and original shape of the mountain, to pass into a state of quiescence while the minor eruptive points on the flanks still remained active, and perhaps became more numerous. A great volcano has been compared to a great tree, which dies down from the top. When the explosive forces become weaker, they are no longer able to raise the molten masses from within to the height of the central orifice, but produce a crack somewhere in the sides; this becomes a crater, is perhaps raised into a cone, and through it minor eruptions go on. The repetition of the process multiplies these secondary vents all round the great central chimney, which probably continues to emit steam and light ashes, but no longer discharges molten rock, while the parasitic cones and craters cover the skirts of the mountain with large deposits of scoriæ and ash, and send into the plain below far-reaching streams of lava. This is the process now going on in many famous volcanoes, of which I may again take Hekla as an instance. Although the soil of its central crater is still hot in some places, and emits a little sulphurous vapor, no eruption has issued thence for a long time; and the last one, that of 1845, was from a chasm about 1000 feet below the top. So, too, most of the lava flows of Etna have taken place from lateral vents; no less than 700 of which have been counted on its sides. Such parasitic craters are very conspicuous on Ararat. On the northwest there are several on the large dome-shaped heights of Kip Ghöll; on the southeast, a good many lie close together on the ridge which unites Great to Little Ararat, behind the spring and station of Sardarbulakh, some of them looking as fresh as if they had been burning last week. The most conspicuous secondary cone of eruption is one which rises boldly on the east-southeast slope, between Sardarbulakh and the top, and from the plain below looks like a huge tooth stuck on the mountain side. Its top is about 13,000 feet above the sea-level. From these craters all sorts of volcanic materials have been ejected, trachytes, andesites, and basalts of various descriptions, with pitchstones, ashes whose consolidation has formed tuff beds, scoriæ like that slag from a furnace, pumice, and in some places at the southwestern foot of the mountain, obsidian, a sort of volcanic glass, black or dark green like the glass of a bottle. A remarkable bed or dyke of this obsidian is also to be found between Erivan and Daratchichak, where it crosses the high-road; it is made by the workmen of Tiflis into handsome ornaments, but is less clear and glossy than that of the famous obsidian mountain Hrafninnuhrygg, in Iceland.

When the first of Ararat became extinct is mere matter of guess; it may have been six thousand or sixty thousand years ago. All that can be said is that no record exists of any eruption in historical times. Stories indeed there are in the

Armenian historians of mountains emitting fire and smoke—this is alleged to have happened in A.D. 441—and of darkness prevailing for thirty days, but they do not point to Ararat in particular, and are too vague to enable us to set any store by them. A German traveler named Reineggs alleges that in February 1785, from a great distance to the northeast, smoke and flames were seen to issue from Ararat, but nobody has believed his entirely unconfirmed assertion. No other volcano in these countries, or indeed in Western Asia at all, can be shown to have been active within time of human memory, although, as has been said already, there are hundreds of extinct volcanic chimneys between Constantinople and Afghanistan. It is only in hot springs, naphtha wells, sometimes in those bubbling pools of mud which are called mud volcanoes, and which occur at both ends of the Caucasus, and now and then in a *solfatara*, a hollow or crevice emitting vapors which deposit sulfur, and, above all, in earthquakes, that the presence of the terrible subterranean forces reveals itself.

One of the most remarkable features of Ararat is the surprising height of the line of perpetual snow. This, which in the Alps averages 8500 to 9000 feet, which in the Caucasus varies from 10,000 feet on the southwestern to 12,000 feet on the northern slopes, rises here to nearly 14,000 feet. It is, of course, different on different parts of the mountain; lower on the northwest, not only because the sun does not strike there with such force, but also because the slopes are more gentle. They descend, as I have said, in broad terraces, which are covered with glittering fields of unbroken *névé*, while on the steeper southeast declivity the snow appears chiefly in vast longitudinal beds, filling the depressions between the great rock ridges that run down the mountain, giving it, as Parrot has remarked, the appearance, from a distance, "of a beautiful pointed collar of dazzling white material on a dark ground." One at least of these rock ridges continues bare of snow to within a hundred feet of the summit, a fact which cannot be completely explained by their inclination, since it is not always too steep to permit snow to lie, nor even by the fact that they are mostly covered by loose volcanic blocks, off which snow melts more readily than from a smooth, solid surface; it is probably, therefore, to be also referred, as Abich suggests, to the decomposition of the minerals contained in the rock. The lowest point at which I noticed a permanent snow-bed on the exposed southeast side is about 12,000 feet above the sea; but in the deep dark valley on the northeast of the mountain, which is sometimes called the Great Chasm [Achora Gorge], sometimes the Valley of St. Jacob, from the little monastery aforesaid, the snow descends even lower. Here is to be found the only true glacier on the whole mountain, those glaciers of which the older travelers talk as seen on its upper sides being either mere beds of *névé* or, in one or two instances on the northwest slope, what are sometimes called glaciers of the second order. In the chasm, however, there is not merely an accumulation of masses of half melted ice that have fallen from the prodigious ice-wall that fringes the top of the cirque in which this chasm ends, but really a glacier [called the Black Glacier extending up to the Araxes Glacier], small and almost covered with blocks and stony rubbish, but with the genuine glacier structure, and united to the great snow mass of the mountain above by one or two snow-filled glens which run up from its head. It is nearly a mile long, and from 200 to 400 yards wide, with its lower end about 8000 feet, its upper nearly 10,000 feet above the sea-level, and bearing a *moraine*.

The great height of the snow-line on Ararat, which seems extraordinary when we compare it with the Alps or the Caucasus, which lie so little farther to the north—Ararat is in latitude 39° 42', Elbruz in latitude 43° 21', Mont Blanc in latitude 45 50'—becomes easy of explanation when it is remembered how many causes besides distance from the equator govern the climate of any given spot. The most powerful influence in determining the point at which snow remains through the year is the rainfall. It is the greater moisture of the air that fixes the snow-line on the outer Himalaya, immediately north of the Bay of Bengal, at about 14,000 feet above the sea, while, as one advances north into Tibet, it rises steadily in the drier air, till it reaches 19,000 feet. So on the part of the Caucasus which looks towards the Black Sea, and receives the south-western rains coming thence, the snow-line is 2000 feet lower than on the colder, but far drier, northeastern slopes. Now Ararat stands in an exceptionally dry region, whose rainfall is only 10 or 12 inches in the year.

The upward rush of air from the plain produces another phenomenon on Ararat, which is the first thing to strike every observer. The top is generally, at least during the months of summer and autumn, perfectly clear during the night and till some time after dawn. By degrees, however, as the plains begin to feel the sun, their heated air mounts along the sides of the mountain, and, when it reaches the snow region, is condensed into vapor, and forms clouds. Springing out of a perfectly clear sky, usually about three or four hours after sunrise, these clouds hang round the hill till sunset, covering only the topmost 3000 feet, constantly shifting their places, but never quite disappearing, till sunset, when they usually vanish, the supply of hot air from below having stopped, and leave the peak standing out clear and sharp in the spotless blue. So it stands all night, till next morning brings the envious clouds again. The phenomenon is just the same as that which those who climb the Southern Alps, to gain a view over the plains of Italy, have so often noted and reviled; one sees it to perfection in Val Anzasca, where the southeast face of Monte Rosa is nearly always cloud-wrapped after 11 AM. Here, however, it seems even stranger, for the other mountains round the Araxes plain, being unsnowed, remain perfectly bare and clear; through the whole sky there is not a cloud except round this one snowy cone. It is a phenomenon, which the explorer of Ararat has to lay his account with, and which makes it useless to hope for a perfect view, except in the early morning.

Although the snow-fields on the mountain are not very extensive, they are quite large enough to supply streams to water its sides; and the want of such streams is due to the porous character of the volcanic soil. At the height of about 13,000 feet, one finds plenty of lively little brooks dancing down over the rocks from the melting snows. But as they descend, they get lost in the wilderness of loose stones that strew the middle slopes of the mountain, and are only

faintly heard murmuring in its deep recesses, mocking with sweet sounds the thirsty wayfarer. Towards the base these streams sometimes, though rarely, reappear in fountains, as they usually do in limestone countries; but they are then even more quickly swallowed up in the alluvial soil of mud and consolidated ash which, sloping gently eastwards, extends from the foot of the rocks to the bed of the Aras. Hence Ararat is painfully dry throughout; one finds it hard to imagine it dripping and steaming after a flood. Sometimes you see a gully whose torn sides and bottom strewn with rounded blocks show that in winter a torrent rushes down; but all autumn long you may wander round and round it, meeting scarcely a brook and rarely even a spring. This is strange and dreary to a traveler accustomed to the mountains of Western Europe, all alive with streams, or even to one coming straight from the Caucasus. Nevertheless, the middle zone of Ararat is covered with good pasture, greener than on most of the Armenian mountains, for here the proximity of the snows moderates the temperature, and there is a reasonable dew-fall, besides the showers which the great mountain gathers. The nomad Kurds wander with their flocks and herds, seeking the upper pastures during the heat of summer, and in winter retreating before the snow to the edge of the steppe land. Here and there they have planted two or three little fields of wheat or barley, and by them built sorry grass-covered huts, but by far the greater number live entirely on the milk and flesh of their cattle, and, when the winter cold becomes too severe, migrate quite down into the valleys that surround the mountain, where, at least on Turkish soil, they often quarter themselves on the Armenian villagers. Their favorite summer camping grounds on the mountain are two, the high open plain which lies between Great and Little Ararat, 7000 to 8000 feet above the sea, and the before-mentioned alpine plateau of Kip Ghöll, a comparatively level tract, where waters descending from the snow-beds above have formed a small lake or rather pond [Lake Kıp or Kúp/Kip], about half an acre in size, and made an oasis of fine herbage at a height of nearly 12,000 feet. Enormous blocks of stone, which have fallen from the sides of the neighboring extinct craters, lie around, and give good shelter; it is the pleasantest high station on Ararat, and the best from which to ascend the summit with tolerable comfort. Except these Kurds, a few Tatars at New Arghuri [Arghuri or Ahora was destroyed in 1840, 36 years before Bryce's expedition], where there is a little bit of cultivation, and possibly some casual Persian robbers straying upon the slopes, there is not a human being all over the vast area of the two mountains.

Not only this pastoral zone, but the whole mountain lies in Central Armenia generally, singularly bare of wood. Here and there a single tree, of no great height, may be discerned in sheltered situations, about 5000 or 6000 feet above the sea; but the only wood of any extent is on the skirts of Little Ararat, at a height of 7500 feet, and is composed of low birches. The Kurds cut it down for firewood, so perhaps it may be merely the relic of a much larger forest. No coniferous tree is to be seen anywhere; nor even an isolated birch at a greater height than 8000 feet. In the month of September, when I visited the mountain, everything is parched; the flowers which love the middle slopes have nearly all withered, and most even of the alpine plants have lost their petals. It is, therefore, an unfavorable time of botanizing; and as I passed over the best botanical region, between 8000 and 12,000 feet, in the darkness of the night both going and returning, there was little chance of observing or gathering rare species. Those which I saw mostly belonged to the same genera as the alpine plants of Europe; such as *Gentiana*, *Campanula*, *Saxifraga*, *Draba*, *Cerastium*. One *Cerastium* in particular ascends to an enormous height, fully 14,000 feet. On the whole, the flora, though interesting, seemed to be scanty. This is usually the case on volcanic mountains, partly because bare stones or rock covers so large a part of their surface, partly because they are so dry, partly, perhaps, owing to the presence of iron or sulphurous ingredients in the soil. The *Cryptogamia*, except lichens, are particularly poor, as always in a dry air; very few mosses were to be seen, and no ferns, except two scrubby bits of our common English *Lastrea Filix mas*. In full summer the show of plants is doubtless finer, especially in the middle part of the mountain, where I passed for a mile through thickets of rose-bushes hanging on the steep sides of a rocky buttress.

Of wild creatures, other than human, there is no great variety, which is natural enough when one considers the want of wood and shelter, but is perhaps not what might have been looked for by those who hold that on this spot all the species of animals were once seen together, descending to disperse themselves over the globe. On the upper crags, the ibex, or wild goat (it is not quite clear which), as well as the wild sheep (*Ovis Musimon*), are found; and a small species of fox has been seen on the snows 15,000 feet above the sea. Lower down there are wolves and lynxes, and in the marshes of the Araxes abundance of wild swine. The botanist Tournefort says he saw tigers, but nobody has believed him; perhaps they were wild cats or leopards. The tiger is found on the southwest shore of the Caspian, round Lenkoran, but there is no evidence of it so far west as this. So far as my own observation goes, the mountain is very ill supplied with life: I saw no quadrupeds, scarcely any birds, except a few vultures and hawks, not many insects even. Of lizards and scorpions, there is great plenty on the lowest slope, but these, of course, belong rather to the fauna of the plains.

From what has been said already, the reader will probably have gathered how utterly unlike Ararat is, not only in details, but even in general effect, to any great mountain in those ranges, such as the Alps or Pyrenees, with which we are most familiar. It is so dry, so bare and woodless, so generally uniform in its structure, having neither spurs running out nor glens running in, even the colors of its volcanic rock have so little variety, that a traveler, especially an artist, might think it unpicturesque and disappointing. Even of scenery of the sterner sort, precipices and rock gorges, there is not much to be seen on the mountain itself, save in the Great Chasm, whose head is surrounded by appalling cliffs, and on the upper southeastern slope, where ranges of magnificent red crags run down from the summit. The noble thing about Ararat is not the parts but the whole. I know nothing so sublime as the general aspect of this huge yet graceful mass seen from the surrounding plains. The color is as simple as the form. From a gently inclined pedestal of

generally whitish hue, formed, as has been said, of volcanic sand and ashes, the steep slopes rise in a belt of green 5000 feet wide; above this is another zone of black volcanic rock, streaked with snow beds; highest of all the cap of dazzling silver. At one glance the eye takes in all these zones of climate and vegetation from the sweltering plain to the icy pinnacle, ranging through more than 14,000 feet of vertical height. There can be but few other places in the world where so lofty a peak (17,000 feet) soars so suddenly from a plain so low, 2000 to 3000 feet above the sea, and consequently few views equally grand. The great summits of the Himalaya, like those of the Alps and the Atlas, rise from behind high spurs and outliers, at some distance from the level country; while the giants of the South American Cordilleras and of Mexico, all of them, like Ararat, volcanic, rise out of high plateau, and therefore lose to the eye a good deal of their real height. Orizaba, for instance, though 17,000 feet high, stands on a base of 7000 feet in height; Chimborazo reaches 21,000 feet, but the plateau of Riobamba beneath it is nearly 10,000 feet above sea-level. The Peak of Teneriffe springs up out of the sea, but its height, 12,000 feet odd, falls considerably short of that of Ararat, and this seems to be true, also, of the lofty volcanoes along the coast of Northern Japan. Any one who is familiar with the Alps, which I take as best known to us, must have been surprised to notice how seldom he saw, near at hand, any single unbroken mountain slope of great vertical elevation. A few points one remembers, such as Courmayeur, where nearly 12,000 feet of Mont Blanc are seen; or Val Anzasca, where, from a valley about 4000 feet above the sea, Mone Rosa ascends, in what the eye thinks a precipice, to 15,000; or Randa, below Zermatt, where the peak of the Weisshorn, 11,000 feet above the spectator, seems to hang over head. These instances, however are instances of a view from a valley, where other hardly inferior heights lie round; here in Armenia the mountain raises himself, solitary and solemn, out of a wide, sea-like plain.

The only exception, so far as I know, to the admiration which it has excited in the minds of the modern travelers who have seen it is supplied by the famous French botanist Tournefort (in the beginning of the eighteenth century), who says, "This mountain, which lies between the south and south-southeast of the Three Churches (the Tatar name for Etchmiadzin) is one of the most dismal and disagreeable sights on the face of the earth." One wonders whether a time will again come when men of taste will think so differently from ourselves.

Ararat has, at present, another claim to importance, in which, so far as I know, it is singular among famous mountains. It is the meeting-point, the cornerstone, of three great empires. On the top of its lower peak, Little Ararat, the dominions of the Czar, the Sultan, and the Shah, the territories of the three chief forms of faith that possess Western and Northern Asia, converge to a point. From this point the frontier between Persia and Turkey trends off to the south-southwest, while that of Turkey and Russia, running along the ridge that joins Little to Great Ararat, mounts the latter, keeps along its top in a north west direction, and then turns west, along the watershed of volcanic mountains, Pambak and Synak, which divides the Russian province of Erivan, including the middle valley of the Aras, from the Turkish pashalik of Bayazid. This is no accident, nor has Ararat been taken as a boundary merely because it was a convenient natural division; it is rather a tribute to the political significance of the name and associations of the Mountain of the Ark. When in 1828 the Czar Nicholas I, having defeated the Persians, annexed the territory round Erivan, his advisers insisted on bringing Ararat within the Russian border, on account of the veneration wherewith it is regarded by all the surrounding races, and which is reflected on the sovereign who possesses it. To the Armenians it is the ancient sanctuary of their faith, the center of their once famous kingdom, hallowed by thousand traditions. He who holds Ararat is therefore, in a sense, the suzerain of the most vigorous and progressive Christian people of the East. To the Mohammedans, Persians, Turks, Tatars, and Kurds, the mountain, though less sacred, is still an object of awe and wonder from its size, its aspect, and the general acceptance among them of the tale of the Flood. In these countries one still sees traces of that tendency, so conspicuous in the ancient world, but almost obliterated in modern Europe, for men of one race and faith to be impressed by the traditions and superstitions of another faith, which they may even profess to disbelieve and hate. No Irish Protestant venerates the sacred island in Lough Derg; but here the fanatical Tatars respect, and the Persian rulers formerly honored and protected, Etchmiadzin and many another Christian shrine; while Christians not infrequently, both in the Caucasus and farther south through the eastern regions of Turkey, practice pagan or Mohammedan rites which they have learnt from their neighbors, and even betray their awe for the sacred places of Islam.

A remarkable result of this superstitious reverence for Ararat is to be found in the scarcely shaken persuasion of its inaccessibility. A Persian Shah is said to have offered a large reward to any one who should get up; but nobody claimed it. There is also a story told of a Turkish pasha at Bayazid who was fired with an ambition to make the ascent, and actually started with a retinue for the purpose. He meant however to do it on horseback, and in fact went no farther than his horse would carry him, which was of course a long way below the snow-line. The first recorded ascent was made, in A.D. 1829, by Dr. Frederick Parrot, a Russo-German professor in the university of Dorpat, whose name is attached to one of the pinnacles of Monte Rosa. He was beaten back twice, but on the third attempt reached the top with a party of three Armenians and two Russian soldiers. The description he gives is perfectly clear and intelligible; and its accuracy has been in most respect confirmed by subsequent observers. There is not, and ought never to have been, any more doubt about his ascent than about De Saussure's residence on the Col du Géant; and the enterprise, considering how little was then known about mountain climbing, the most modern of all our arts or sciences, and how much superstitious prejudice he had to overcome in order to persuade the natives to aid or accompany him, was not unworthy to be compared with that of the great Genevese. Nevertheless, in spite of the evidence he produced, that of two Russian soldiers who had gone with him, in spite of his own scientific attainments, and the upright and amiable

character which shines through every line of his book, Parrot's account was disbelieved, not only by the people of the neighborhood, but by several men of science and position in Russia and elsewhere, and he died before justice had been done to his success. Two of the Armenians whom he took with him to the summit, on being examined, declared that they had ascended a considerable distance but had seen much higher slopes rising above them; and this became the conviction of the whole country-side. When Herr Abich made his ascent in 1845—it was the third, the second having been that of Spassky Aftonomof, who went up in 1834 in order to ascertain whether it was really true that the stars are visible at noon from the tops of the highest mountains—he reached the eastern summit, which is only a few feet inferior in height to the western, and six minutes' walk from it, and finding the weather threatening, returned without going on to the western. The consequence was that, when, anxious to destroy the popular superstition, he produced his companions as witnesses before the authorities at Erivan, to make a regular deposition, they turned round on him, and solemnly declared and swore that from the point which they had reached a great part of the horizon was covered by much more lofty mountains. This of course actually strengthened the Armenian belief, nor did it yield to the fact that General Chodzko, while conducting the triangulation survey of Transcaucasia, reached the top with a large party, moving slowly upwards from August 11 to August 18, and stayed there three days in a tent pitched on the snow. A party of Englishmen who ascended in 1856, from the Turkish side, were assured by Turks and Kurds that the mountain was inaccessible, and considered themselves the first to climb it, evidently doubting both Parrot and Abich. And at this moment, I am persuaded that there is not a person living within sight of Ararat, unless possibly some exceptionally educated Russian official in Erivan, who believes that any human foot since Father Noah's has trodden that sacred summit. So much stronger is faith than sight; or rather, perhaps, so much stronger is prejudice than evidence.

As I have mentioned these ascents, a word or two may be said regarding the routes taken. Parrot had his headquarters at the then existing monastery of St. Jacob, on the edge of the great chasm of Arghuri; he mounted from this to the west; encamped on the second occasion at Kip Ghöll, on the third and successful one at a point somewhat higher than Kip Ghöll, just under the perpetual snows, and reached the summit by a long march over the terraces and generally gentle slopes of *névé*, which sink from it on the northwest side. This way is not to be recommended to a solitary climber, because the ice slopes are occasionally steep enough to require some step cutting—they repulsed Abich on his third attempt—and here and there a crevasse may be met with; however, a solitary ascent is not to be recommended in any case. But I believe it to be, on the whole, the easiest and least fatiguing route, and the best for a party. Notwithstanding which, it seems to have been only once followed since Parrot's time. Abich's fourth and successful ascent in 1845—he deserves scarcely less credit than Parrot for the tenacity with which he clung to his purpose under so many difficulties—was made up the southeastern face from Sardarbulakh; and it was on this side that both Chodzko and the Englishmen of 1856 mounted. As I shall have to describe it in giving my own experiences, nothing more need be said of it here, further than to remark that it is probably the best route for a single man or a very small party, since it involves, at least in the autumn, very little snow work. No one seems to have climbed the southwestern slope looking towards Bayazid and the alpine lake Balykh Ghöll; but Herr Abich, who has reconnoitered this side, told me in Tiflis that he believed it to be quite practicable. The chief advantage of the southeastern route, besides the scantiness of snow, lies in the fact that it is entirely in Russian territory, so that one need have less apprehension of robbers, and can use the Cossack station at Sardarbulakh (of which more later) as a base of operations.

The last event of importance in the history of Ararat is the great earthquake of 1840. I have more than once spoken of the profound chasm, which on the northeast side of the mountain, over against Aralykh, runs right into its heart. This chasm ends in a sort of cirque hemmed in by tremendous walls of black or grey lava and tuff conglomerates, capped by other precipices of ribbed blue ice, while at the bottom of the cleft, almost covered by masses of stone that have fallen from above, is to be found the only true glacier on the hill. Near the mouth of this chasm there formerly stood a pleasant little Armenian village of some two hundred houses, named Arghuri, or Aghurri, whose inhabitants, raised above the heats of the plain, and out of the track of war, had led a peaceful pastoral life for many generations, dwelling in the midst of their orchards and vines, feeding their flocks in the alpine pastures above them, and cultivating a few fields where the generally stony soil permitted the spade or plough to be used, and the stream from the glacier spread vegetation over the slopes. They boasted not only of the Patriarch's vine, bearing grapes delicious to eat, but which Heaven, in memory of the fault they betrayed him into, had forbidden to be made into wine; but also of an ancient willow trunk, which had sprung from one of the planks of the Ark. Not far above the village, on the spot where the angel of the legend had appeared to the monk, stood the little monastery of St. Jacob, eight centuries old, and still higher was a tiny shrine beside a spring of bright clear water, the spring of the *tetagush* legend; while on the opposite side of the glen the Persian Sardar or viceroy had erected a sumptuous summer villa to which he was accustomed to retire from the scorching heats of Erivan. Setting apart the wandering Kurds, this was the only inhabited spot on the mountain, the place in which its traditions centered, and where they were faithfully preserved. Towards sunset in the evening of the 20th of June 1840 (old style), the sudden shock of an earthquake, accompanied by a subterranean roar, and followed by a terrific blast of wind, threw down the houses of Arghuri, and at the same moment detached enormous masses of rock with their superjacent ice from the cliffs that surround the chasm. A shower of falling rocks overwhelmed in an instant the village, the monastery, and a Kurdish encampment on the pastures above. Not a soul survived to tell the tale. Four days afterwards, the masses of snow and ice that had

been precipitated into the glen suddenly melted, and, forming an irresistible torrent of water and mud, swept along the channel of the stream and down the outer slopes of the mountain, far away into the Aras plain, bearing with them huge rocks, and covering the ground for miles with a deep bed of mud and gravel. Even now, after thirty-seven years, the traces of this convulsion are distinctly visible; in some places the precipices from which the masses fell show a fracture mark fresh as of yesterday. The direction of the shocks, which were felt as far as Tiflis, the Caspian, and the Lake of Urumia, was from the center of Great Ararat, towards the northeast. It was reported in Europe at the time that Ararat had broken out in eruption; but for this story there is no foundation: the dust which accompanied the great rock fall was probably mistaken for smoke by those who saw it from a distance. Doubtless the blast was produced by the fall of the rock masses. Since then a few huts have again arisen somewhat lower down the slope than the site of Old Arghuri and without the mouth of the chasm; here dwell a few Tatars—for the Armenians (several, happening to be away from the village, escaped) do not seem to have returned to the desolated spot—and pasture their cattle on the sides of the valley which grass has again begun to clothe. But Noah's vine and the primeval willow, and the little monastery where Parrot lived so happily among the few old monks who had retired to this hallowed spot from the troubles of the world, are gone for ever; no Christian bell is heard, no Christian service said, upon the Mountain of the Ark.

Chapter VII

At 8 AM, on the morning of the 11th of September, we set out from Aralykh to ascend the mountain. We had arranged to start at sunrise, knowing how terrible the heat would be for the first part of the road, but to get a large party under way is always troublesome, and certainly not least so in these countries, where there is no sense of the value of time, and no conception of the conditions of a successful mountain expedition. Indeed, what with the collecting of the soldiers, the packing of provisions, the hundred little things that occur to one's mind at the last moment, a compass, snow spectacles, warm gloves, and, above all, the indispensable lemons, more than three hours would have been consumed had we been in any hands but those of our genial and energetic host. The last thing was to write a few lines home, wondering what the next lines would have to report, and then we filed out of the cantonment amid adieux and good wishes given in strange tongues. We were nine in all, six soldiers of the Cossack detachment, the gentleman who had undertaken to interpret, and our two selves. The soldier in command was a Kurd named Jaafar, a man of great mental as well as bodily force, in whom the colonel reposed full confidence, and whose singularly keen and expressive glance made us wish that we could have held some direct communication with him. Remembering that on the same day of the year, five years ago, I had started to climb the Schreckhorn, and three years before, the Maladetta, it amused me to think how unlike this cavalcade of ours was to the parties of loud-voiced Englishmen and stalwart guides that issue from an Alpine inn before daylight to "do" some stimulating peak or pass. We were all mounted, though certainly on no fiery chargers, and might rather have been taken for a reconnoitering or marauding party, sent to plunder some village across the Persian border, which lay six miles off. The Cossacks were of course fully armed and equipped, while my friend and I, in addition to pistols stuck in the belt, brandished heavy ice-axes, the management of which, together with that of the bridle and a big white umbrella, required some dexterity. An umbrella and a horse do seem rather incompatible, not only with one another, but with a mountain ascent; but we would willingly have looked even more ridiculous for the sake of some protection against the fiery shower of beams that descended from the cloudless sky, and was reflected from the whitish wastes over which we took our way.

If Great Ararat is the most majestic, Little Ararat may claim to be the most elegant of mountains; the eye is never tired of its beautiful lines. The two peaks are connected by a rough-topped ridge which forms the back of the sloping plain I have described, and also marks the frontier between the Russian and Turkish empires. Over it is the path to Bayazid, distant some nineteen miles to the southwest, while five miles to the east, on the northeastern side of Little Ararat, one enters the territories of the Shah. The place is therefore particularly well suited for predatory operations, since, when the marauders are attacked on any one of the three soils, they can promptly retire into one of the other two, and snap their fingers at justice, just as evil-doers in England used to be fond of establishing themselves on the boundary between two counties, where they could slip away from the sheriff of either. Hence Russia, who cares more about the security of the subject than her neighbors do, has placed here a sort of small frontier guard, consisting of seven or eight armed Cossacks, who remind the mountain Kurds of the existence of the Czar, and keep an eye on the border depredators, who, lurking about in Persia or Turkey, now and then swoop down on the Aras valley for a little booty. Before 1828, when Persia still held all of what is now the Russian side of Ararat, this plain of Sardarbulakh was a regular stronghold of the robber Kurds, who not only spoiled and murdered travelers attempting to pass this way to Bayazid, but constantly plundered the villages of the plain and the two highways of commerce which pass along the two sides of the mountain.

The height above the sea of this sloping plain varies from 8818 feet, which is given as the height of the pass leading to Bayazid, and 7000 feet; and Sardarbulakh in the middle is 7514 feet. Its lumpy volcanic hillocks—I have called it a plain, but it is far from being level—are covered with good grass; and about a mile off, near the foot of Little Ararat, appears the only bit of wood on the whole mountain—a grove of low birches, whose dimensions the wasteful Kurds are rapidly reducing. Near the birch trees is a sort of subterranean village, huts formed by hollowing out the ground and laying a few boughs, covered with turf, across the top, through which comes such light as can penetrate. These huts are often uninhabited: I fancy it is mostly when cold weather comes on that the Kurds take to them.

[Douglas W. Freshfield, detailing his 1868 ascent of Ararat in *Travels in the Central Caucasus and Bashan* stated the following about these huts]:

On a knoll 300 feet above the plain we found the group of huts, which have been used as a resting-place by most of the explorers of Ararat. These queer dwellings are underground burrows, constructed like the villages on the Georgian steppes. A door of twisted twigs, on being opened, reveals a hole in the hillside, which forms the mouth of a long, winding, dark passage leading into two or more chambers lighted by holes in the roof. The floor of these horrid caverns is the natural soil, and their atmosphere is earthy and tomb-like, while the darkness that pervades them adds to their depressing effect. The roofs are formed of branches covered with turf, and as there is nothing outside to distinguish them from the solid ground, it is easy to walk over them unawares. One of our horses, while grazing, suddenly sank into one of these dangerous traps, and was left, with only its forequarters emerging from the ground, in a position from which it was extricated with great difficulty.

There is a tale told that there was once an Armenian village, inhabited by people whom the Sardar had transported hither, but who forsook the place when his power ended. Sardar, or Sirdar, a name with which Anglo-Indians are familiar, means general or governor, and was the title of the Persian governor of Erivan. Sardar-bulakh is therefore translated as the Sardar's well. It is, of course, the presence of drinkable water that has made the Kurds and Cossaks fix themselves here, for (as has been said already) there is no other constant spring nearer than the valley of Arghuri, four hours' journey.

There would then remain little more than an hour's daylight to reach a higher camping ground, where, of course, we should have much less chance of sleep than there below in the tent which the Cossacks had vacated for us. Yielding, therefore, most unwillingly to circumstances, and believing that we were practically abandoning our chances for the morrow, I suggested that we should remain and sleep at Sardarbulakh, and make a start upwards as soon as the moon rose, shortly after midnight. This idea, like anything that delayed a move, was accepted.

While all this was going on, there was another scene in progress, which served to appease our impatience. The two Cossack tents stood on a grassy slope, about forty yards above the well which gives its name to the place; and to this well there now came, driving their flocks before them, another band of Kurds, who had just crossed the flanks of Little Ararat from Persia in search of fresher pasture. The well is an elliptical hollow, about ten feet long by five broad, surrounded by a sort of rude, loose wall of lumps of lava, with the water in it, when we first saw it, about three feet deep. One could see where the spring rose into it from under the wall, sweet, clear, and cool. As the water lay too deep sunk for cattle to reach it, troughs were set up all over the pasture round; Kurdish boys and girls brought brazen bowls and carried the water in these to fill the troughs, whence the patient creatures drank. The sheep, whose bleatings filled the air, were mostly either light brown, or black, or white, not much larger than those of the Scotch Highlands; the goats, however, were thoroughly Oriental, mostly white, with long, soft hair, and large, pendant ears, just like the scapegoat of Mr. Holman Hunt's picture. For nearly two hours the process of watering went on, boys and girls and women coming and going round the well, and ladling out the water till hardly any was left in the bottom. Every one was armed with a knife or sword, at least, sometimes huge old pistols, sometimes a musket or matchlock besides. On the head was a woolen cap, having strips of silk or cotton cloth wound round it to form a rude kind of turban. The women's dress was rather brighter in colors, and their striped or embroidered short petticoats, below which cotton drawers descended to the ankle, were extremely pretty; the cap was generally of scarlet cloth; in their nostrils and ears jewels were hung, while round their necks they bore a profusion of ornaments, strings of gold and silver coins and beads, and colored stones; even the bareheaded girls, whose plaited locks fell over the shoulders, had always such a necklace. Unlike their Mohammedan sisters of the plains, their faces were unshielded by a veil, and they showed no shyness or timidity in the presence of the Cossacks and ourselves. Each, like the Fates in Catullus, bore a distaff in one hand, with a lump of wool upon her wrist, and this they plied as they drove the flocks before them. So picturesque a scene, or one that brought so vividly to mind the first simple life of the world, unchanged in these earliest seats of mankind, we had never seen before. On each side a towering cone rose into heaven, while in front the mountain slope swept down into the broad valley of the Aras.

Returning at sunset to the tent, we found some Cossaks sent out to meet us by the watchful Jaafar, who feared we might be picked off by stray marauders, and looked rather reproachfully at us for having gone forth alone. Supper was prepared, the Cossacks cooking theirs and ours in a big pot over a fire kindled on the hillside, which lit up their figures and the still more picturesque figures of the Kurds, who crouched round it just like the brigands in an opera scene. After the meal, which consisted of boiled mutton and milk, both procured from the Kurds, we had some of the unfailing tea, and lay down for a little sleep. One feels little inclined for sleep on these occasions; we stayed long outside watching the Cossacks and the stars, by whose light it was just possible to make out the lines of Little Ararat in front. The silence of the mountain was astonishing.

About 1 AM we got off, thirteen in all, and made straight across the grassy hollows for the ridges which trend up towards the great cone, running parallel in a west-northwesterly direction, and enclosing between them several long narrow depressions hardly deep enough to be called valleys. The Kurds led the way, and at first we made pretty good progress. The Cossacks seemed fair walkers, though less stalwart than the Kurds; the pace generally was better than

that with which Swiss guides start. However, we were soon cruelly undeceived. In twenty-five minutes there came a steep bit, and at the top of it they flung themselves down on the grass to rest. So did we all. Less than half a mile farther, down they dropped again, and this time we were obliged to give the signal for resuming the march. In another quarter of an hour they were down once more, and so it continued for the rest of the way. Every ten minutes' walking—it was seldom steep enough to be called actual climbing—was followed by seven or eight minutes of sitting still, smoking and chattering. How they did chatter! It was to no purpose that we continued to move on when they sat down, or that we rose to go before they had sufficiently rested. They looked at one another, so far as I could make out by the faint light, and occasionally they laughed; but they would not and did not stir till such time as pleased themselves. We were helpless. Impossible to go on alone; impossible also to explain to them why every moment was precious, for the acquaintance who had acted as interpreter had been obliged to stay behind at Sardarbulakh, and we were absolutely without means of communication with our companions. One could not even be angry, had there been any use in that, for they were perfectly good-humored. It was all very well to beckon them, or pull them by the elbow, or clap them on the back; they thought this was only our fun, and sat still and chattered all the same. When it grew light enough to see the hands of a watch, and mark how the hours advanced while the party did not, we began for a second time to despair of success.

I fancy we passed, in a grassy hollow at about 9000 feet above the sea, the spot, which they call the Hermitage, which seems to be the site of General Chodzko's meteorological camp of July and August 1850. He told me there was a spring there, but either it is dry at this season or else we missed it. There was pasture in many places, but we saw no cattle. What we were able to remark and enjoy was the changing aspect of the sky. About 3 AM, there suddenly sprang up, from behind the Median mountains, the morning star, shedding a light such as no star ever gave in these northern climates of ours, a light that almost outshone the moon.

As we scrambled along a ridge above a long narrow winding glen filled with loose blocks, one of the Kurds suddenly swooped down, like a vulture, from the height on a spot at the bottom, and began peering and grubbing among the stones. In a minute or two he cried out, and the rest followed: he had found a spring, and by scraping in the gravel had made a tiny basin out of which we could manage to drink a little. Here was a fresh cause of delay; everybody was thirsty, and everybody must drink. When at last we got them up and away again, they began to dawdle and straggle; after a while two or three sat down, and plainly gave us to see they would go no farther. By the time we had reached a little snow-bed whence the now strong sun was drawing a stream of water, and halted on the rocks beside it for breakfast, there were only two Cossacks and the four Kurds left with us, the rest having scattered themselves about somewhere lower down.

Accordingly I resolved to take what I wanted in the way of food, and start at my own pace. We were now at a height of about 12,000 feet. Everything lay below us, except Little Ararat opposite. The Kurds never come higher on the mountain than their flocks can find pasture, and on this side at least the pasture does not reach so high as where we were. Moreover, they have a superstitious reverence for the mountain, scarcely less than that of the Armenians: only, while the Armenian faithful believe it to be guarded by angels, the Kurds hold it to be the favorite haunt of devils and Jinn, who are ready to take vengeance on the disturber of their revels. The shepherds, therefore, avoid the heights as much as possible. It was an odd position to be in: guides of two different races, unable to communicate either with us or with one another, guides who could not lead and would not follow, guides one-half of whom were supposed to be there to save us from being robbed and murdered by the other half, but all of whom, I am bound to say, looked for the moment equally simple and friendly, the swarthy Iranian as well as the blue-eyed Slav.

At eight o'clock I buckled on my canvas gaiters, thrust some crusts of bread, a lemon, a small flask of cold tea, four hard-boiled eggs, and a few meat lozenges into my pocket, bade good-bye to my friend, and set off. Rather to our surprise, the two Cossacks and one of the Kurds came with me, whether persuaded by a pantomime of encouraging signs, or simply curious to see what would happen. The ice-axe had hugely amused the Cossacks all through. This slope, a sort of talus or "scree," as they say in the Lake country, was excessively fatiguing from the want of firm foothold, and when I reached the other side, I was already so tired and breathless, having been on foot since midnight, that it seemed almost useless to persevere farther. However, on the other side, I got upon solid rock, where the walking was better, and was soon environed by a multitude of rills bubbling down over the stones from the snow-slopes above. The summit of Little Ararat, which had for the last two hours provokingly kept at the same apparent height above me, began to sink, and before ten o'clock I could look down upon its small flat top, studded with lumps of rock, but bearing no trace of a crater. Mounting steadily along the same ridge, I saw at a height of over 13,000 feet, lying on the loose blocks, a piece of wood about four feet long and five inches thick, evidently cut by some tool, and so far above the limit of trees that it could by no possibility be a natural fragment of one. Darting on it with a glee that astonished the Cossack and the Kurd, I held it up to them, made them look at it, and repeated several times the word "Noah." The Cossack grinned, but he was such a cheery, genial fellow that I think he would have grinned whatever I had said, and I cannot be sure that he took my meaning, and recognized the wood as a fragment of the true Ark. Whether it was really gopher wood, of which material the Ark was built, I will not undertake to say, but am willing to submit to the inspection of the curious the bit which I cut off with my ice-axe and brought away. Anyhow, it will be hard to prove that it is not gopher wood. And if there be any remains of the Ark on Ararat at all—a point as to which the natives are perfectly clear—here rather than the top is the place where one might expect to find them, since in the course of ages they would get carried down by the onward movement of the snow-beds along the declivities. This

wood, therefore, suits all the requirements of the case. In fact, the argument is, for the case of a relic, exceptionally strong: the Crusaders who found the Holy Lance at Antioch, the archbishop who recognized the Holy Coat at Treves, not to speak of many others, proceeded upon slighter evidence. I am, however, bound to admit that another explanation for the presence of this piece of timber on the rocks at this vast height did occur to me. But as no man is bound to discredit his own relic, and such is certainly not the practice of the Armenian Church, I will not disturb my readers' minds, or yield to the rationalizing tendencies of the age by suggesting it.

Fearing that the ridge by which we were mounting would become too precipitous higher up, I turned off to the left, and crossed a long, narrow snow-slope, that descended between this ridge and another line of rocks more to the west. It was firm, and just steep enough to make steps cut in the snow comfortable, though not necessary; so the ice-axe was brought into use. The Cossack who accompanied me—there was but one now, for the other Cossack had gone away to the right some time before, and was quite lost to view—had brought my friend's alpenstock, and was developing a considerable capacity for wielding it. He followed nimbly across; but the Kurd stopped on the edge of the snow, and stood peering and hesitating, like one who shivers on the plank at a bathing-place, nor could the jeering cries of the Cossack induce him to venture on the treacherous surface. Meanwhile, we who had crossed were examining the broken cliff, which rose above us. It looked not exactly dangerous, but a little troublesome, as if it might want some care to get over or through. So, after a short rest, I stood up, touched my Cossack's arm, and pointed upwards. He reconnoitered the cliff with his eye, and shook his head. Then, with various gestures of hopefulness, I clapped him on the back, and made as though to pull him along. He looked at the rocks again, and pointed to them, stroked his knees, turned up and pointed to the soles of his boots, which certainly were suffering from the lava, and once more solemnly shook his head. This was conclusive; so I conveyed to him by pantomime that he had better go back to the bivouac where my friend was, rather than remain there alone, and that I hoped to meet him there in the evening, took an affectionate farewell, and turned towards the rocks. There was evidently nothing for it but to go on alone. It was half-past ten o'clock, and the height about 13,600 feet, Little Ararat now lying nearly 1000 feet below the eye.

I am no disciple of that doctrine of mountaineering without guides which some English climbers have of late preached zealously by example as well as precept, and which others, among them so high an authority as my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen, have wisely set themselves to discourage. But if there is any justification for the practice, that justification exists when guides are not to be had. Here not only had the Cossack and the Kurd refused to come on, but they really could not have been of use if they had. They were not guides in any sense of the word; they were an escort. They had never been so high in their lives before, knew nothing either of climbing in general or of this particular mountain, were not properly equipped for the work. In fact, their presence could have been no gain in any way, except that, if one of us had hurt himself on the rocks, the other two might have carried him down or taken news to the party below. What had happened was so obviously what might have been, and indeed had been, expected, that it would have been folly for a man to come so far unless he was now prepared to proceed alone. The weather looked pretty steady, although clouds were gathering round the top, and there seemed to be so little snow on this side that the usual risks of solitary mountaineering were absent, and a single climber would be just as well able to get along as a party. Convincing myself by these reasonings that there was nothing rash in proceeding, I fell to work upon the trachytic crags in front, but found them so nasty that it soon became necessary to turn off to the left (west). There I emerged on a very long, straight slope of volcanic stones, fragments of trachyte, basalt, amygdaloid, and so forth, lying at so high an angle (probably over 33 degrees) that they were often rolling down of themselves, and always gave way under the foot and hand, so that I slipped down nearly as much as I went up. It was nearly two hours' incessant toil up this bit of "screes," owing partly to its nature, but chiefly to the state of fatigue and breathlessness in which I found myself, and which was no doubt due to the thinness of the air. Having never before experienced, even on the top of Monte Rosa, any of the discomforts ascribed to this cause, I had fancied that my present sensations, which had begun in crossing the first slope of stones at a height of only 12,300 feet, were caused simply by want of training and of sleep. Now, however, when between every two steps one had to stop and gasp for breath, it was plain that the rarity of the air must be the real cause, though there was not headache, nausea, gushing of blood from the nose and ears, nor any other of those symptoms of mountain sickness on which the older travelers dilate. Oddly enough, it grew no worse as I mounted; in fact, was felt rather less at 17,000 feet than at 13,000. Why this was so, or why I should have felt it so low on Ararat at all, I cannot explain: the phenomena of the subject are odd altogether, and seem to deserve more study than they have received.

The practical question at this moment was whether with knees of lead, and gasping like a fish in a boat, I should be able to get any farther. Another element of difficulty was added by the clouds, which had now established themselves, as they usually do at this hour, a good way down from the top, and might prevent me from finding it, or at least beguile me into a wrong track, which there would not be time to retrace so as to reach the desired goal. With these grounds for reflection I sat down to eat an egg and take stock of the position. The conclusion was that, whenever a "bad place" presented itself, or three o'clock arrived, it would be prudent, indeed necessary, to turn back were the top never so near. "Bad places" are more serious things when one is alone, especially in descending, not so much because you lose the help of a companion as because they are more likely to affect the nerves and oblige the climber to proceed with more deliberation. In this case, moreover, time was everything, because the place of bivouac must be

reached by 6 PM, after which there would be no light fit for walking, and a night without food or wrappings in the open air, even at 12,000 feet, might have had permanently disagreeable results.

This repulsive stone slope abuts at its upper extremity upon a line of magnificent black cliff, from which there were hanging several glittering icicles, 200 feet long, frozen waterfalls in fact, produced by the melting of the snow on the snow slope behind. Before reaching this, I had grown so weary of the loose stones, up which it was difficult to advance except by a succession of spurts with the aid of hands and ice-axe, as to turn still farther to the left, and get on to another rock-rib, composed of toppling crags of lava, along whose farther or western side, the *arête* itself being too much broken, it was possible to work one's laborious way over the fallen masses. Here a grand sight, perhaps the grandest on the whole mountain, presented itself. At my foot was a deep, narrow, impassable gully, a sort of gigantic *couloir*, in whose bottom snow lay where the inclination was not too steep. Beyond it a line of rocky towers, red, grim, and terrible, ran right up towards the summit, its upper end lost in the clouds, through which, as at intervals they broke or shifted, one could descry, far, far above, a wilderness of snow. Had a Kurd ever wandered so far, he might have taken this for the palace of the Jinn.

This gully is, no doubt, one of those ancient volcanic fissures with which the mountain is seamed, and from which great part of its lava has been discharged. The same phenomenon appears in most volcanic regions; in Iceland, for instance, tremendous eruptions have taken place from similar rifts or *gjás*, as they are called there, opening on the sides or even at the base of a mountain. This particular fissure, which axis of the mass, midway between the craters of Kip Ghöll on the northwest and Little Ararat on the southeast, and indicates the line along which the volcanic forces acted most powerfully. Following its course towards the base of the cone, I could see that line prolonged in a series of small cones and craters along the top of the ridge, which connects Great and Little Ararat. Some of those craters, into which I looked straight down from this point, were as perfect as if their fires had but just cooled, each basin-shaped hollow surrounded by a rim of miniature black cliffs, with heaps of ashes and scorixæ piled on their sides. In the bottom of one or two water had gathered in greenish tarns or pools.

Not knowing how far the ridge I was following might continue passable, I was obliged to stop frequently to survey the rocks above, and erect little piles of stones to mark the way. This not only consumed time, but so completely absorbed the attention that for hours together I scarcely noticed the marvelous landscape spread out beneath, and felt the solemn grandeur of the scenery far less than many times before on less striking mountains. Solitude at great heights, or among majestic rocks or forests, commonly stirs in us all deep veins of feeling, joyous or saddening, or more often of joy and sadness mingled. Here the strain on the observing senses seemed too great for fancy or emotion to have any scope. When the mind is preoccupied by the task of the moment, imagination is checked. This was a race against time, in which I could only scan the cliffs for a route, refer constantly to the watch, husband my strength by morsels of food taken at frequent intervals, and endeavor to conceive how a particular bloc or bit of slope which it would be necessary to recognize would look when seen the other way in descending.

Fortunately, the clouds were really clouds, and not a generally diffused mist, so that, when I was not actually in them, it was possible to see clearly all round. Two courses were open. One, which would probably have been the better, was to bear off to the right, and get up the low cliffs at the top of the long stone slope which I had deserted, on to the upper slopes of rock, or gently inclined snow, which lead to the top. The other was to turn back a little, and descend to the left into a vast snow basin lying immediately southeast of the summit, and whose northwest acclivity formed, in fact, the side of the summit. This acclivity looked a likely place for crevasses, though I do not remember to have seen any, and was steep enough to require step cutting. Its *névé* would have been quite practicable for a party, but not equally so for a single man, who might have had some trouble in stopping himself if once he slipped and went off. Luckily there was on the east side of the basin, close under the range of precipice on the projecting point of which I was standing, though separated from it by a narrow snow-bed, a steep slope of friable rocks, quite free from snow, which ran up to a point where the clouds hid them, but where there seemed no sign of any cliff to bar the way. Forced to decide between a course which was difficult, but almost certainly practicable, and another probably easier, but possibly impracticable, I could not hesitate long in choosing the former. Retracing my steps a little from the precipice, and climbing along the border of a treacherous little ice-slope, where there was fortunately some handhold on the rocks enclosing it, I got into the great snow basin aforesaid, just where the gully or fissure I have already mentioned descends from it, and attacked the friable rocks. Their angle (38 to 43 degrees) would have made them simple enough if they had only been firm, but they were so rotten that neither hands nor feet could get firm hold, and I slipped down and scrambled up and floundered about pitiably, having no longer steel enough in the muscles for a rush. Among these rocks I was saluted by a violent sulphurous smell, much like that of a battery of cannon just fired off, and perceived at the same time patches of whitish and reddish-yellow stuff efflorescing from the ground, reminding me of similar deposits noticed on Hekia and the half extinct volcano of Krabla in Iceland. This was delightfully volcanic, and I began to look about for some trace of an eruptive vent, or at least for hot vapors betraying the presence of subterranean fires. Nothing of the kind, however, was to be seen. The shape of this basin makes it probable that it was really a former seat of volcanic action; but the smell and the efflorescence are no doubt due—as Abich, who (as I afterwards learnt) had observed them, remarks—to the natural decomposition of the trachytic rock, which is full of minute crystals of iron pyrites (sulfide of iron). This, in disintegrating under the moisture of these heights, gives off sulfuric acid gas, whence the smell, and combines with the lime and alumina present in the felspar of the same rock to form sulfates of lime and alumina, mixed with more or less sulfate of iron or chloride of iron, which gives the reddish or

yellow hue. Lumps of these and other minerals are seen lying about; I found one, a piece of gypsum, with handsome crystals, on the surface of the snow close to the top. Abich further suggests that the process of chemical change which goes on so briskly here may be one cause of the freedom of these rocks from snow, an extraordinary phenomenon when one considers that they run up to very near the summit (17,000 feet). Not only is some heat evolved in the decomposing process, but the sulfates thereby formed themselves act as solvents, just as common salt does when you sprinkle it on an ice-covered door-step.

All the way up this rock-slope, which proved so fatiguing that for the fourth time I had almost given up hope, I kept my eye fixed on its upper end to see what signs there were of crags or snow-fields above. But the mist lay steadily at the point where the snow seemed to begin, and it was impossible to say what might be hidden behind that soft white curtain. As little could I conjecture the height I had reached by looking round, as one so often does on mountain ascents, upon other summits, for by this time I was thousands of feet above Little Ararat, the next highest peak visible, and could scarcely guess how many thousands. From this tremendous height it looked more like a broken obelisk than an independent summit 12,800 feet in height. With mists to the left and above, and a range of black precipices cutting off all view to the right, there came a vehement sense of isolation and solitude, and I began to understand better the awe with which the mountain silence inspires the Kurdish shepherds. Overhead the sky had turned from dark blue to an intense bright green, a color whose strangeness seemed to add to the weird terror of the scene. It wanted barely an hour to the time when I had resolved to turn back; and as I struggled up the crumbling rocks, trying now to right and now to the left, where the foothold looked a little firmer, I began to doubt whether there was strength enough left to carry me an hour higher. At length the rock-slope came suddenly to an end, and I stepped out upon the almost level snow at the top of it, coming at the same time into the clouds, which naturally clung to the colder surfaces. A violent west wind was blowing, and the temperature must have been pretty low, for a big icicle at once enveloped the lower half of my face, and did not melt till I got to the bottom of the cone, four hours afterwards. Unluckily, I was very thinly clad, the stout tweed coat reserved for such occasions having been stolen on a Russian railway. The only expedient to be tried against the piercing cold was to tighten in my loose light coat by winding round the waist a Spanish *faja*, or scarf, which I had brought up to use, in case of need, as a neck wrapper. Its bright purple looked odd enough in such surroundings, but as there was nobody there to notice, appearances did not much matter. In the mist, which was now thick, the eye could pierce only some thirty yards ahead; so I walked on over the snow five or six minutes. To mark the backward track, I trailed the point of the ice-axe along behind me in the soft snow, for there was not longer any landmark: all was cloud on every side. Suddenly, to my astonishment, the ground began to fall away to the north; I stopped, a puff of wind drove off the mists on one side, the opposite side to that by which I had come, and showed the Araxes plain at an abysmal depth below. It was the top of Ararat.

Two or three minutes afterwards another blast cleared the air a little to the west, which had hitherto been perfectly thick, disclosing a small snow valley, and beyond it, a quarter of a mile off, another top, looking about the same height as the one I stood on. Remembering, what I had strangely forgotten on the way up, that there are two tops—one sees them distinctly from Erivan and Aralykh—I ran down the steep, soft sides of the snow valley, across it in the teeth of the blast, and up the easy acclivity to the other top, reaching it at 2:25 PM. It is certainly the higher of the two, but the difference is not great, only some thirty feet or so, and I cannot understand how General Chodzko comes to speak of it as amounting to thirty-six meters. The longitudinal depression between them is 100-150 feet deep. Both tops are gently sloping domes or broad convex hummocks of snow, on which there is not a trace of rock, nor a trace of the crosses which first Parrot and afterwards Chodzko set up, just as little as of Noah's ship itself. One thought of the pictures of childhood, the Ark resting on a smooth, round grassy eminence, from which the waters are receding, while the Patriarch looks out of the window, and compared them with this snow-filled hollow, just large enough to have held the vessel comfortably, raised 15,000 feet above the surrounding country. Neither is there any sign of a crater. You might describe the whole top as a triangular undulating plain, rather more than half as big as the Green Park in London, descending gently on the northwest, with extensive terraces like fields of *névé*, less gently towards the north-northeast, but steeply on all other sides, and on the east breaking off, after a short snow-field, in the tremendous precipices that overhang the chasm of Arghuri. There was nothing about it to suggest an extinct volcano, were it not known to be one. But in the ages that have elapsed since the time when eruptions took place from the great central chimney of the dome, a time probably far more remote than that when the minor cones that stud the flanks of the mountain were active, all sorts of changes may have taken place, and the summit we now see may be merely the bottom of an ancient crater, whose craggy rim has been altogether broken away. Looking around, it was hard to imagine that volcanic fires had ever raged on such a spot, robed as it now is in perpetual winter.

Immeasurably extensive and grand as the view was, it was also strangely indefinite. Every mountaineer knows that the highest views are seldom the finest; and here was one so high that the distinctions of hill and valley in the landscape were almost lost. Ararat towers so over all its neighbors, much more than Mont Blanc or even Elbruz do over theirs, that they seem mere hillocks on a uniform flat. The only rivals are in the Caucasus, which one can just make out all along the northern sky. Kazbek and Elbruz, the latter 280 miles away, are visible, but I could not be sure that I saw them, for the sky was not very clear in that direction. Beyond the dreary red-brown mountains of the Karabagh one strained to discover a line that might be the Caspian or the plain of the lower Kur, but, of course, at such a distance (260 miles) it would be impossible to distinguish a sea-surface. Besides, the Caspian is below the horizon; so one must reject, unless the aid of refraction be called in, the stories of mariners who, sailing on it, have been able to

make out the white cone of Ararat. Nearer at hand, only forty miles to the north, rose the huge extinct volcano of Ala Göz, with its three sharp black rocky peaks enclosing an ancient crater, in whose bottom were patches of snow; and, nearer still, the dim plain of Erivan encircled the mountain to the north and east, with the Araxes winding like a faint streak of silver through it. A slight rise in the ground showed where Erivan itself lay, but the bright green of the orchards and vineyards round it was lost at this distance, though, standing in the market-place of the city, Ararat seems to tower right over the spectator's head. Northwest the upper valley of the Araxes could be traced as far as Ani, once the capital of the Armenian kingdom, and the great Russian fortress of Alexandropol, and the hills where Kars, its enemy, looks forth defiance. To the south and southwest the eye ranged over a wilderness of bare red-brown mountains, their sides seamed by winter torrents that showed in the distance like dark lines, not a tree nor a patch of green on their scorched and arid slopes, scarcely even a fleck of snow on their tops, though many rose more than 10,000 or 11,000 feet above the sea. Prominent among them was the long stern line of hills that enclose the upper course of the Euphrates (the Eastern Euphrates or Murad Su), whose source could be distinguished about forty miles to the south, beyond the hollow where Bayazid lies, the houses of which were hidden by a low ridge. Still further to the south, from the shores of the Lake of Van, rose the great volcanic peak of Sipan Dagh, and to the southeast the stupendous masses of Savalan Dagh, that look over all Azerbaijan to the waves of the Caspian. Neither the Lake of Van nor the still larger Lake of Urumia was visible; for both, though high above the sea, are enclosed by lofty hills. But far beyond them, more than two hundred miles away, I could just descry the faint blue tops of the Assyrian mountains of Southern Kurdistan, the Qardu land, where Chaldee tradition places the fragments of the Ark, mountains that look down on Mosul and those huge mounds of Nineveh by which the Tigris flows. Below and around, included in this single view, seemed to lie the whole cradle of the human race, from Mesopotamia in the south to the great wall of the Caucasus that covered the northern horizon, the boundary for so many ages of the civilized world. If it was indeed here that man first set foot again on the unpeopled earth, one could imagine how the great dispersion went as the races spread themselves from these sacred heights along the courses to the great rivers down to the Black and Caspian Seas, and over the Assyrian plain to the shores of the Southern Ocean, whence they were wafted away to other continents and isles. No more imposing center of the world could be imagined. In the valley of the Araxes beneath, the valley which Armenian legend has selected as the seat of Paradise, the valley that has been for three thousand years the high-road for armies, the scene of so much slaughter and misery, there lay two spots which seemed to mark the first and the latest points of authentic history. One, right below me, was the ruined Artaxata, built, as the tale goes, by Hannibal, and stormed by the legions of Lucullus. The other, far to the northwest, was the hollow under the hills in which lies the fortress of Kars, where our countrymen fought in 1854, and where the flames of war were so soon again to be lighted.

Yet how trivial history, and man the maker of history, seemed. This is the spot which he reveres as the supposed scene of his creation and his preservation from the destroying waters, a land where he has lived and labored and dies ever since his records begin, and during ages from which no record is left. Dynasty after dynasty has reared its palaces, faith after faith its temples, upon this plain; cities have risen and fallen and risen again in the long struggle of civilization against the hordes of barbarism. But of all these works of human pomp and skill, not one can be discerned from this height. The landscape is now what it was before man crept forth on the earth; the mountains stand about the valleys as they stood when the volcanic fires that piled them up were long ago extinguished. Nature sits enthroned, serenely calm, upon this hoary pinnacle, and speaks to her children only in the storm and earthquake that level their dwellings in the dust. As says the Persian poet:

“When you and I behind the veil have passed,
O but the long long while the world shall last,
Which of our coming and departure heeds
As the Seven Seas should heed a pebble's cast.”

Yet even the mountains change and decay. Every moment some block thunders from these crags into the glens below. Day by day and night by night frost, snow, and rain are loosening the solid rock, and the ceaseless action of chemical forces is dissolving it into its primal elements, setting free the gases, and delivering over the fragments to torrents that will sweep them down into the plain. A time must come, if the world lasts long enough, when even the stately peaks of Ararat will have crumbled away and be no more. “Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of the hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years fail not.”

In addition I am bound to say that the view, spite of the associations it evoked, spite of the impression of awe and mystery it gave, was not beautiful or splendid, but rather stern, grim, and monotonous. The softer colors of the landscape seemed to be lost; the mountains, seen from above and seldom showing well-marked peaks, were uncouth, rough-hewn masses. One had a sense of vast sterility and dreariness as the vision ranged over this boundless expanse of brown, and sought, almost in vain, a point to recognize. For most of these huge mountains are nameless on our maps; and these bare valleys are peopled by races of whom we know little except that they live now much as they may have lived when that first dispersion of mankind took place. Then suddenly, while the eye was still unsatisfied

with gazing, the curtain of mists closed round again, and I was left alone in this little plain of snow, white, silent, and desolate, with a vividly bright green sky above it and a wild west wind whistling across it, clouds girding it in, and ever and anon through the clouds glimpses of far-stretching valleys and mountains away to the world's end.

The awe that fell upon me with this sense of utter loneliness made time pass unnoticed; and I might have lingered long in a sort of dream had not the piercing cold that thrilled through every limb recalled me to a sense of the risks delay might involve. It was half-past two o'clock, so that only four hours of daylight remained; there might be some difficulty in retracing the morning's path, even by the help of the piles of stone set up. It was clear therefore that the hope of descending the summit towards the west and north for the sake of better examining its structure, which no one seems to have properly described, must be abandoned. So I ran down the easy slope into the little valley between the two tops, climbed the snow wall of the eastern one, and followed the marks made by my ice-axe in the snow back to the spot where I had left the rocks. The mist was now so thick that it would otherwise have been impossible to hit the right direction; for though I had a compass, on a volcanic mountain like Ararat, with plenty of iron in the rocks, one could not have trusted it. I have seen the needle on the basaltic top of Ben Nevis point every way in succession. Once on the slope of friable rock, the way was pretty clear, since a snow-bed lay on each hand, though the treacherous nature of the surface made caution necessary and progress slow. Towards the bottom I was tempted to try a glissade on the narrow left-hand snow-bed, but it turned out to be much too rough and too hard for the purpose; so my glissade ended in a slip and some bruises, the only little mischance which befell me during the day.

A few minutes more brought me to the upper end of the great fissure of eruption already mentioned, along whose eastern side I had climbed in the morning. Surveying the declivity below me from the top of this rock-rib, it seemed possible to descend by a route considerably shorter than that which I had then followed, viz. by striking diagonally across the slopes of loose rock towards the east-southeast, instead of due southeast down the cone. Taking this line, which presented no great difficulty except where the loose, angular blocks became so large that much time was lost in climbing over and among them, I dropped down at last upon a large snow-bed,¹ and in crossing it had the ill-luck to break off the spike of my ice-axe, which had been unskillfully fixed by the military carpenter of Aralykh. It was well that the inclination was not steep enough to make the rest of the way dangerous; by caution and the use of the head of the ice-axe to cut steps or take hold of the ice, I got safely across, and on to another mass of loose rocks, down which I pursued the same south-eastward course, and thought I began to recognize the long ridge up which we had toiled in the morning. To the left rose the sharp peak which is called, in Tatar, Tach Kilissa, and at the foot of it, on the top of the ridge I have just mentioned, was the spot where my friend and the Cossacks had halted; the spot I had now to make for. By this time the sun had got behind the southwestern ridge of the mountains, and his gigantic shadow had already fallen across the great Araxes plain below, while the red mountains of Media, far to the southeast, still glowed redder than ever, then turned swiftly to a splendid purple in the dying light.

Quickening my pace as the risk of missing the encampment became greater, feeling, in fact, that it was now a race against the onward striding night in which defeat would be serious, I caught sight at last of two Cossacks loitering on the edge of the slope of sand and gravel which had proved so fatiguing in the morning, and after a while made them hear my shouts. When I reached them, it was six o'clock; and though at this height (12,200 feet) there was still good twilight, Aralykh and the ruins of Artaxata below lay already shrouded in gloom. Twenty-five minutes' more walking brought us to the place where the Kurds and the other Cossacks had bivouacked. We examined the provisions, and found that nothing but a lump of bread, a mere scrap of meat, two eggs, and thimbleful of cold tea were left. Happily neither of us had much appetite; the sun had kept hunger at bay for him, and meat lozenges had done the same for me; so our frugal evening meal was soon dispatched. A little hot tea would have been welcome—four weeks under the scepter of the Czar had made us perfect slaves to tea; but as there was neither fuel, nor water, nor a vessel to boil it in, the hope was no sooner formed than abandoned. Accordingly, about half-past seven, we lay down on the hillside,

¹ At the point where I crossed, it is a kind of tongue from a wider snow-field above, up which Messrs. Freshfield and Tucker and their Swiss guide seem to have made their spirited attack on the mountain in 1868. They went (as far as I can gather) from Sardarbulakh right up past Tach Kilissa, and were prevented from reaching the summit only by illness, the result of long travel in Russian telegas. See the very interesting account of their expedition in Mr. Freshfield's 'Central Caucasus.'

my friend valiantly on the top of the ridge, I a yard or two below him on the eastern side, the Cossacks and Kurds all round where they severally pleased, and we courted sleep. Although rather tired, we found the position too novel, and lay half conscious in a drowsy reverie; dropping off at last to wake with a start at midnight, when the moon's pale horn was just showing over the Median mountains. How we got safe down was a marvel to us at the time. There was no track, but the Kurds seemed to have an idea where they were going. Many were the halts which the Cossacks made, stretching themselves on the grass to laugh and talk; nor was it now worthwhile to hurry them. At length the morning star rose in unearthly brightness, and not long after we came to a sweet little grassy plain, where two or three Kurds, whose flocks were pasturing hard by, had lit a fire of withered bushes, to which our Kurds led us up in a friendly way, bidding us (as we guessed) warm ourselves. The Cossacks had nearly all gone on out of sight, and we were (as it afterwards struck us) entirely at the mercy of these wild, swarthy fellows, on whose glittering daggers and matchlocks the firelight played. However, they had no thought of mischief; perhaps, if it had occurred to them, the sense of hospitality, which is proverbially strong in the East, would have restrained them from harming those with whom they had eaten. Then between four and five o'clock another glorious dawn began; and just before sunrise we reached the tent at Sardarbulakh, much to the relief of Jaafar's mind, and flung ourselves down on the tent floor to sleep the sleep of the weary.

Roused again at eight or nine o'clock—both the watches had stopped, so we could only guess at the time of day—we ought clearly to have gone up Little Ararat, and obtained from his top a fuller notion of his great brother's structure. Provisions, however, ran short, and the Cossacks were anxious to return to Aralykh, taking back with them their comrades whom we had found in the two tents, as the post was to be withdrawn for the season. Accordingly the tents were struck, everything packed on the baggage horses, the Kurds paid for their day's and night's service on the hill. Then, before starting, the Cossacks gathered in a ring in front of the spot where the tents had stood, and began singing Russian songs. The words we, of course, could not follow—I believe they were mostly camp songs, some commemorating military exploits, some farewells to departing comrades—but the airs, usually lively, but occasionally tender and plaintive, dwelt long in our memory. One stood in the middle and led, firing off a gun at intervals, the others sometimes singing with him, sometimes merely joining in the refrain or chorus. The voices were good, and the time perfect.

Before noon we bid a regretful farewell to Sardarbulakh, and rode down into the plain, this time taking a track outside of the buttress of Takjultu, instead of behind it, and thence across the arid slopes to Aralykh, which we reached about four o'clock without further incident, though once during the way an alarm was given that there were strange people about. Owing, I suppose, to the bracing quality of the keen dry air, we were much less fatigued than we had expected to be. Colonel Shipshef welcomed us with characteristic heartiness, and we spent a pleasant evening with him, lamenting more than ever that unhappy event at the tower of Babel, which made our communications so limited. Next morning we mounted the tarantass once more, and drove off across the Araxes and through the dusty villages back into the furnace of Erivan.

Two days later I found myself at the Armenian monastery of Etchmiadzin, near the northern foot of Ararat, and was presented to the archimandrite who rules that illustrious house. It came out in conversation that we had been on the mountain, and the Armenian gentleman who was acting as interpreter turned to the archimandrite and said: "This Englishman says he has ascended to the top of Massis" (Ararat). The venerable man smiled sweetly. "No," he replied, "that cannot be. No one has ever been there. It is impossible."

Chapter VIII

After returning to Erivan from Ararat, we made a hurried expedition to the famous monastery of Etchmiadzin, which claims to be the oldest monastic foundation in the world, and has for many centuries been the seat of the Armenian Patriarch or Katholikos, the spiritual head of all true Armenians, in whatsoever empire, Russian, Turkish, Persian, Austrian, or British, they may dwell. It is distant about thirteen miles, some two hours driving, from Erivan, and the journey gave us our first experience of that wonderful vehicle the Russian telega—a cart, or shallow lidless box, about six feet long by four wide, set upon wheels with no pretence of springs or anything in the nature of springs. A little hay was thrown in, among which we were told to squat. We put in a traveling bag, but soon found it impossible to sit upon that, or on the sides of the box itself, for the jolting knocked one about like a pea on a hot iron. As soon as the pace was quickened they become so violent that we could only hold ourselves in the cart by grasping its sides, and a whisky flask which had been safely lodged in my companion's breast coat-pocket was shot out like a cannon ball, and flung to a distance in the road, where of course it broke into a hundred pieces. How people manage to travel for many continuous days in such vehicles without grievous bodily harm, it is hard to understand, but the thing is done.

There was something inexpressibly solemn in the great desolate plain that lay around us under the dying light—a plain in which Armenian tradition places the site of the Garden of Eden. The curse of the flaming sword might well be thought to have clung to it, for few spots on earth have seen more ruin and slaughter than this Araxes valley. It has been the highway through which the Eastern conquerors and marauders, from the days of the Sassanid kings Shapur

and Chosroes Nushirvan, down through those of the Saracen and Turkish and Mongol and Persian invaders, have poured their hosts upon the fertile shores of the Euxine. Here the Romans strove with the Parthians; here Alp Arslan overthrew the Armenian kingdom of the middle ages; here, down to our own days, Turks and Persians and Russians have carried on a scarcely interrupted strife. From Kars to Djulfa there is hardly a spot of ground that has not been soaked with blood, hardly a village that has not many times been laid in ruins. Yet when the storm is past, the patient peasant returns; he draws water again from the ancient canals whose network covers the plain, and remembers these scourges of mankind only in vague traditions, where the names of Nimrod and Semiramis are mingled with those of Tamerlane and Nadir Shah.

We drove straight to the monastery, prowled for some time in the deepening night round its lofty walls, much like those of a medieval fortress, and at last made out a gate, to which after long hammering there came a porter. When he opened and saw that we were foreigners, he brought at last a young Armenian gentleman from the Armenian colony in Southern Russia, who was able to speak French. Our troubles were then at an end; we were received with much friendliness by the archimandrite, and lodged in guest-chamber overlooking the great front quadrangle.

Etchmiadzin is the ecclesiastical metropolis of the Armenian nation, and has been so, though with a long intermission (AD 452-1441), since the year A.D. 302, when, according to tradition, the first Christian church in Armenia was founded here by St. Gregory the Illuminator, on the spot whereon the Savior had descended in a ray of light. The place was then called, from some ancient king who had founded it, Vagarshabad, a name still retained by the neighboring village. The word Etchmiadzin means in Armenian, "The only-begotten descended."

Tiridates, or Dertad, the reigning monarch whom Gregory then enlightened (Enlightenment is the technical Armenian term for conversion), was the first king who embraced Christianity along with his people, Constantine's so-called conversion not happening till either twelve or thirty-seven years later, according as one reckons to the battle of the Milvian Bridge or to his baptism. Armenia, therefore, is the first country to have enjoyed the privileges of an ecclesiastical establishment, although the attacks of the Persian fire-worshippers, and of various Mohammedan Khalifs, Sultans, and Shahs in later times, gave it a very troubled and precarious existence. At first the bishop of Etchmiadzin was a suffragan of the metropolitan of Caesarea in Cappadocia, by whom Gregory had been consecrated; but when the Persian kings established their supremacy in the next century, they broke this link between Armenia and the Roman Empire. Shortly afterwards came the Council of Chalcedon, whose decrees the Armenian Church first hesitated, and finally, in A.D. 491, refused to accept, thereby severing herself from the Orthodox Eastern Church. So to this day she remains out of communion with the Greek patriarch of Constantinople, as well as with the Church of Russia, and is held both by them and by the Roman Church to be tainted with the Monophysite heresy, which the fathers of Chalcedon condemned. Ever since those days, though attempts at reconciliation were occasionally made, and seemed for the moment to be successful, she has remained a perfectly independent ecclesiastical body, owning no superior above her own Patriarch or Katholikos, who is, in fact, a sort of administrative Pope, but of course without infallibility. He is chosen by the whole body of Armenian bishops throughout the world, who meet here for the purpose, and is then confirmed by the Czar, who protects him and enforces his authority. The present church is supposed to contain some bits of wall as old as the fourth century, the main body of it being ascribed to the seventh or eighth; but I found it impossible to get any information on the spot which could be relied on, and the architectural style in these countries varies so little from one century to another that only a practiced and skilful archaeologist could undertake to pronounce on the date of a building from examining it. Like nearly all the older churches of Russia, as well as of the East, it is small—small, that is to say, compared with its fame or importance—perhaps a little larger than the Temple Church in London. It is cruciform, with exceedingly short transepts and a short apse—in fact, you might call it a square with four shallow recesses—the interior rather dark, with an air of heaviness which is scarcely redeemed by the frescos on the walls, drawn and colored in the usual style of Persian arabesque, with birds, flowers, and various conventional ornaments. However, any cheerful decorations of this kind are welcome after the revolting pictures of hell and judgment that adorn the walls of so many Russian and Greek churches. There are two patriarchal thrones, one on each side of the apse, and a tabernacle over the central altar under the dome marks the spot on which the Savior descended. Here a slab of marble covers the hole through which St. Gregory drove into the earth all the devils that in his day infested Armenia, and gave false oracles in the heathen temples. On this very spot there had stood a shrine and image of the goddess Anahit, just as the hill of Monte Casino. On the whole, the interior is impressive, with a certain somber dignity, and an air of hoary antiquity [showing characteristics of age, especially having gray or white hair] about everything; its pictures, some of them portraits of sainted patriarchs, and other decorations, have little artistic merit, but they are less offensive to the Protestant eye than the black Madonnas incrustated with precious stones which are the glory of Russian or other Orthodox places of worship. Externally the church has little that is distinctive about it. The tall central cupola rises into an octagonal spire, or rather conical tower, of the usual Armenian type, and is said to date from the seventh century, though I cannot believe it to be anything like so old. A learned ecclesiological writer (Dr. Neale), however, insists that the ground plan of the church is rather Byzantine than Armenian, and his reasons, so far as I can judge of such a matter, seem to be sound. Of true Armenian architecture the finest and most characteristic specimens are to be found in the ruined city of Ani, some thirty miles from here, towards Kars, and just within the Turkish border.

What struck me as the oldest and most interesting are the two refectories. Old also is the library, to which we had come with great expectations, hearing of its treasures in the way of ancient manuscripts. Unfortunately there was not

one on the spot who could tell us much about them, and I doubt if there is any one who knows much. The stock of printed books is quite small, not reaching 2000, and of course the great majority are in Armenian, most of the newer ones in Russian. There seems to be little ground for hoping that any Greek or Latin manuscripts, unless, possibly, of late ecclesiastical writers, remain to be discovered here; it is rather to Orientalists that researchers into the libraries of the Armenian monasteries are to be recommended. The treasure, or, as we should say, the sacristy, in which the holy relics that constitute the great glory of Etchmiadzin are kept, is a new building at the east end of the church. Unhappily we could not gain admittance, owing to a cause which might seem to cast a painful light on the want of security, or at least of confidence, among even the respectable ecclesiastics of this country. There is but one key to the treasury, and that key is kept by the patriarch, who carries it with him wherever he goes. He was then in a cool mountain retreat some miles away on the slopes of Ala Göz, and we were therefore obliged to forego the hope of seeing the head of the holy spear wherewith the Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ. It is asserted to have been brought to Armenia by Thaddeus the Apostle, and has therefore a far more respectable pedigree, so to speak, than the rival "holy lance" which the Crusaders discovered at Antioch with such magnificent results, or than that which Sir John Maundeville tells us he saw at Constantinople in the possession of the Eastern Emperor, not to speak of other claimants. In this treasure-house there is also a fragment of Noah's Ark, obtained, according to the legend stated in an earlier chapter, by the monk St. Jacob; and, what is the most curious of all, a withered mummy hand enclosed in a casing of silver, which purports to be the very hand of St. Gregory the Illuminator. This hand is actually used to this day in the consecration of every patriarch, who being touched by it receives the grace, as it were, direct from the founder of the Armenian Church. It is an instance of the carrying out, on its physical side, of the doctrine (I will not say of apostolic succession) of the transmission through earthen vessels of spiritual gifts, and their communication by physical means, which one is startled to find still in full force in an important and respectable branch of the Christian Church. In the middle ages nothing would have seemed more natural or impressive; in the nineteenth century it looks a little different.

Besides the cells of the monks, who number from twenty to thirty, there are, on the west side of the great square, apartments for the patriarch and for the archbishops, bishops, and archimandrites from other monasteries, who are frequently to be found here, consulting him on the affairs of their churches, or attending the general and supreme synod, which sits, almost in permanence, under his presidency. Finally there is the seminary, a sort of school or college for the education of young Armenians chiefly, but not exclusively, with a view to their entering the priestly office. There were about eighty boys or young men then attending, who are of course lodged in the monastery, and for the most part remain in it from the beginning to the end of their education, coming often from great distances. Among those present in the dining hall some were from the heart of Persia, others from Cilicia, others from all sorts of places scattered through Asia Minor. The well-marked national type of countenance, the dark eyes and straight, black hair, came out strongly; and the quick intelligence of many of the faces was no less characteristic. The school labors under serious disadvantages from the difficulty of procuring competent teachers, and the state of blank ignorance in which so many pupils come. A magazine called 'Ararat' has recently been established; it is printed at the monastery, and of course in Armenian; nor is the press of Etchmiadzin idle in producing educational manuals, the class of books which are (strange as a British parent may think it) at present most scarce among the Armenians of these countries.

It was a Friday, but they made no difficulty about giving us a substantial meat supper, some one probably knowing that the English do not regard those church fasts which are so prodigiously important in these countries. It is really quite a new light to a Westerner to find that the chief difference, in the wilder places, between Christians, pagans, and Mohammedans, consists in the times or rules of fasting. There seemed to be very few other guests in convent at the time of our visit. Probably it was the dead season; the heat was oppressive; there were fevers about; the Patriarch, to confer with whom most of the ecclesiastical visitors come, was absent in the mountains. He is named Kevork (George).

Now, like almost all the great old shrines, like Santiago, Einsiedeln, St. David's, Loretto, it has lost this source of wealth, and has also lost the visitors who halted at it as they passed along what was once the great trade route from Trebizond by Erzerum and Erivan to Tavriz and Northern Persia. The trade from Persia to the Black Sea now goes entirely through Turkish territory, I suppose in order to avoid Russian custom-houses, by way of Bayazid on the southwestern side of Ararat. The village of Vagarshabad, lying a few hundred paces from the monastic fortress, is quite an insignificant place, with scarcely any trace of its former greatness. Only one mass of ancient brick building marks the place where there once stood, according to Armenian historians, 20,000 houses, the place where Tiridates reigned, at the time of his conversion, over a powerful kingdom. These Oriental cities, being mostly built of unburnt brick, and without great public structures, perish very swiftly, and leave little trace behind. Usually only the churches remain; and so here, near the convent, here stand two churches, probably more ancient than the cathedral itself, those of St. Rhipsime and St. Caiana, who were martyred in the time of Tiridates. Rhipsime was a virgin of exquisite beauty. Accompanied by a band of maidens, she had fled from Rome to escape the addresses of the reigning emperor, whom, as a pagan, she could not espouse. Tiridates was equally smitten by her charms, and when she refused him for the same reason, he put her to death with hideous tortures, and killed at the same time her nurse Caiana.

The present condition of the monks leaves much to be desired, as far as knowledge and education goes, but in general their monastic life will fairly bear a comparison with that of most Western as well as Russian foundations. Their dress is becoming: it consists of a long black robe of a thin serge or tissue, not so thin as crape, and a peaked cap, from which a sort of veil of the same material falls back over the neck and shoulders. On the whole they impress a

traveler perhaps more favorably than the inmates of convents generally do; inferior as they are in learning and polish to the brethren of that famous Western foundation, the mother of all Western monastic houses and the home of their founder, which is perhaps the chief rival of Etchimiadzin in antiquity and historical fame—the great Benedictine abbey of Monte Casino.

Unfortunately the situation of Etchimiadzin is by no means healthy, placed as it is in an excessively hot plain, on the banks of a stream which, being diverted into a number of channels for the purpose of irrigation, loses itself in fever-producing marshes. Except in the large convent garden just outside the walls, which borders the magnificent stone-faced fish pond, or reservoir, formed by a late patriarch, there are no trees anywhere near; the landscape is bare and open all the way from the glens of Ala Göz. The glory of the place is its view of Ararat, which rises full in front with indescribably majesty, covered on this side with snow for a good way down. We could not take our eyes off it all the time we remained. Doubtless the neighborhood of the holy mountain adds sensibly to the veneration which the oldest seat of their faith and the storehouse of so many relics commands from all pious or patriotic Armenians.

The Armenians are an extraordinary people, with a tenacity of natural life scarcely inferior to that of the Jews, and perhaps more remarkable, since it has not been forced upon them by such unremitting persecution. They have been a nation known by their present name ever since the days of Herodotus¹ at least, and probably a good deal earlier. Under the Persian empire they seem to have retained their own princes, merely paying tribute to the Great King, and marching in his armies, as they did under Xerxes against Greece. Not very long afterwards Digran, whom the Greek and Roman writers call Tigranes, threw off the suzerainty of the Parthian Arsacidae, who had become the chief power of Western Asia, and made Armenia the center of an empire which stretched from the Orontes to the Caspian. As he had supported his father-in-law, Mithridates of Pontus, against the Romans, he was attacked and his power shattered by Lucullus, who penetrated to the capital of Artaxata, at the northeast foot of Ararat. The conversion of this Tiridates by his cousin, St. Gregory the Enlightener, whom he had confined for fourteen years in a dry well, is the turning-point in the history of the nation.

From that day Armenia became the bulwark of Christianity in Asia. Overrun and ravaged by the Persian fire-worshippers, the first race or faith that set the example of religious intolerance and persecution, who at last extinguished the Arsacid kingdom about the year 440 AD; then, after the fall of the Persian power, by the Mohammedan khalifs of Bagdad; sometimes supported, sometimes abandoned by the Byzantine emperors, and torn all the while by internal dissensions and revolutions, she rose in the ninth century to be again a state of some importance in the world. The first flood of Arab conquest had subsided; the Roman emperors had even recovered lost territory; the Abbasside sovereigns had seen their dominions seized by a swarm of local potentates. Armenia was now ruled by the dynasty of the Bagratians, a family who claim to be descended from King David the Psalmist, and who may very possibly be really of Hebrew origin. Their capital was Ani, between Etchmiadzin and Kars, the magnificent ruins of whose churches and palaces remain to attest the transitory splendor and wealth of the kingdom they ruled. This Bagratid race gave a line of kings to Georgia, while some of its branches established themselves in Mingrelia and Imeritia. The family still exists, and ranks high among the nobility of Russia; one of them was the Prince Bagration, who was killed at Borodino in the Napoleonic campaign of 1812.

This mediaeval Christian kingdom had bloomed in the lull of Muslim invasion caused by the decay of the great Bagdad khalifate. The storm that followed proved more fatal. The aggressive movement of Islam passed into the hands of a lately converted and fiercer race, the Turks, who were pressing in from the steppes of the Oxus. In the eleventh century the great Seljukian sultan Toghrul Beg conquered Persia, and became the master of Bagdad and the protector of the impotent khalif. His successor, Alp Arslan (the valiant lion), overran Armenia and Georgia in 1066 (the year of another famous conquest); the Romans of Constantinople, on whom Armenia had leaned, regarding with comparative indifference the miseries of Monophysite heretics. Malek Shah, the successor of Alp Arslan, completed the conquest; Ani was sacked, and the Christian throne of Armenia finally overturned in 1075; while the Turkish arms were carried as far as the Caucasus and the Euxine.

¹ Herodotus speaks of them as living on the Upper Euphrates, but conceives of the Saspeires as occupying the eastern part of what we should call Armenia, placing the latter between the Medes and the Colchians. Perhaps his Saspeires are the Iberians.

In the repeated invasions and devastations of their country which occupied these weary years, a great part of the Armenian people were driven from it, and scattered over the adjoining lands, especially through Asia Minor, where their descendants still constitute a large element, probably nearly one-fourth, of the entire population; while the void which they left was partially, but only partially, filled up by the immigration of half nomad Mohammedan Tatars or Turkmans, whose villages now lie scattered through Russian and Turkish Armenia. The existence of Armenia as an independent state was at an end; and her later history, which I have neither the knowledge nor the time to describe, is little more than a dreary record first of warfare between the Byzantine emperors and the Seljukian Turks, then of devastations by the Mongols and the hosts of Timur, still later of a long and indecisive contest between the Ottoman sultans and Persia for the possession of these once flourishing provinces. But the Armenian people survived. In 1827 the Czar Nicholas went to war with Persia, and wrested from here the whole upper valley of the Araxes, including Etchmiadzin itself. War with Turkey followed in 1828: the invaders under Paskievitch penetrated as far as Erzerum, and when they retired on the conclusion of peace in 1829, a multitude of Armenian subjects of Turkey followed them across the border and settled in Russian territory, where, unsatisfactory as we may think their condition, they are infinitely better off than they were under the Sultan or the Shah. I do not say that the Armenians love Russia, but neither do they hate her. The reviving sentiment of nationality, the generally diffused belief that the Ottoman power is sickening towards death, the spread of education, the easier intercourse with the West, the prosperity of individual Armenians in the foreign countries where they have established themselves as merchants, have all of them stimulated the hopes and aspirations of the more instructed classes, so that one even begins to hear of schemes for the erection of an Armenian state.

At present Armenia is a mere geographical expression, a name which has come down to us from the ancient world, and has been used at different times with different territorial extensions. The country, if one can call it a country, has no political limits, for it lies mainly in the dominions of Turkey, but partly also in those of Russia and Persia. It has no ethnographical limits, for it is inhabited by Tatars, Persians, Kurds, and the mixed race whom we call Turks or Ottomans, as well as by the Armenians proper. It has no natural boundaries in rivers or mountain chains, lying, as it does, in the upper valley of the Euphrates, Tigris, Aras, and Kur. Wherever they go, they retain their faith, their peculiar physiognomy, their wonderful aptitude for trade.

In Constantinople and most parts of Asia Minor, as well as in Transcaucasia, commerce is to a great extent in their hands; and they are usually found more than a match for either Jews or Greeks. Here, in their own country, however, they are chiefly peaceable, stay-at-home peasants, living in low, mud-built cottages, or sometimes in underground dwellings, tilling the soil just as their ancestors may have done thirty centuries ago, very ignorant, poor, and unambitious, scarcely distinguishable in dress and in some of their habits, except, of course, so far as religion comes in, from the Tatars who are interspersed among but never intermingled with them. Here, in Russian territory, the women go about unveiled, just as in Europe. According to Baron Haxthausen, an able German who traveled here thirty years ago, the young wife is for a year permitted to speak to no one save her husband, and to him only when they are alone; she may then talk to her baby, and after an interval to her mother-in-law, then to her sister-in-law, next to her sister, last of all to other women, but always in a whisper. Domestic slavery of course there was, as everywhere under Persian and Turkish rule; but all Armenians not slaves were equal: there was neither serf on the one hand nor any noble caste on the other. While every second Georgian you meet calls himself a prince, no Armenian seems now to claim any title of rank.

Physically the Armenians are middle-sized, with a swarthy, yellowish complexion, less yellow, however, than that of the Persians, who are said to be (linguistically) their nearest relatives, black, straight hair, a forehead rather wide than high, and a large nose. The women are often handsome, with an erect carriage, regular features, and fine dark eyes. The language they now speak differs widely from that in which their ancient literature, dating from the fourth century, is preserved, and in which their worship is still conducted. They call it, and themselves, Haik, claiming to be descended from an eponymous hero Haik, who was the brother of Karthlos, ancestor of the Georgians, and the son of Thorgamos or Thogamah, who was the son of Gomer the son of Japheth. It belongs to the Iranian group of the Indo-European family, and is said to be copious and strong, though certainly not melodious. The earliest inscriptions found in the country are in a cuneiform character; somewhat later, in Graeco-Roman times, the Greek alphabet was used by the Western, the Syriac by the Eastern Armenians, until, in the beginning of the fifth century, St. Mesrop invented the present Armenian character, and thereby, it has been thought, gave a considerable impetus to the independent national feeling of the people. The Turkish and Mongol invasions had destroyed what little learning or wealth had been left in the country.

Some have risen to posts of high dignity. For instance, the commander of the invading Russian army in Asia at this moment, General Loris Melikoff, is an Armenian, as is the present governor of Daghestan. Their family, properly Melikian (*ian* is a patronymic in Armenian, like Mac or Ap), is one of the oldest and most respectable in Armenia. There are, I believe, thirty other Armenian generals in the service of the Czar.

Nothing can be more pitiable than the condition of these poor people. They are not only (like the Rayahs of Bosnia and Bulgaria) plundered and outraged by rapacious tax gatherers and zaptiehs, they are also constantly exposed to the robberies of the marauding Kurds, who live among them, roving over the mountains in summer, and in winter descending to quarter themselves upon the Christian villagers, where they slay and pillage to their heart's content. In fact, the sheep-dogs are little better than the wolves; the burning and plunder of the bazaar at Van, last

winter, was the work, according to the uncontradicted narrative that reached this country, not so much of Kurds as of Turkish soldiers. Why, it may be asked, do the Armenians not rise in rebellion against these outrages, as their forefathers did against the Seleucids or the Parthians? Partly because they are unarmed, partly because the population is thin, with Tatars, Kurds, and Ottomans scattered among them, but mainly because ages of slavery have broken the spirit of the nation, because there is no one to lead them, no means of combined action, no such prospect of sympathy or support from European powers as even the people of Herzegovina or Bulgaria might have looked for. Better the Czar than the Sultan, is the feeling of both; but better any sort of local independence than either Czar or Sultan. Their remote geographical position renders it difficult for any Western power to help them.

Chapter IX

Before taking leave of Armenia, I wish to say a few words about the Kurds, who dwell scattered among the other inhabitants through nearly the whole of its area, and have recently won for themselves a horrible fame by the massacres which they are using their service under the Sultan's banner to perpetrate. They are a remarkable race: indeed, of all that we saw on our journey, their encampment on Ararat interested me most. For there is something very striking in coming for the first time upon that nomad like which still prevails over so large a part of our globe, and once prevailed even more widely. Though a part of this wide area is called Kurdistan upon our maps, they are nowhere its sole inhabitants. Tatars, or Osmanli Turks, or Persians, or Armenians, always occupy the valleys and towns, while they cling to the heights, seldom or never taking to agriculture, but living on the milk and flesh of their flocks. Their number has been guessed at a million; of course there are no means of ascertaining it. In person they are mostly rather stout and strongly built than tall, with splendid chests and arms, swarthy complexions, small deep-set eyes of blue or grey, black hair, and a large mouth. The women, who are freer and more independent than those of Persia and Turkey, and are even said to have separate property, do most of the work; robbery is the favorite pursuit of the men, whose dark faces and fierce restless glance give them a menacing appearance that does not belie their character. Nevertheless, those who know them best believe them to be a race of great natural gifts, more apt to learn than Tatars and more vigorous in action than Persians. They are certainly much less fanatical; indeed, many (not to speak of those Nestorian Christians who are said to belong to this race, nor of the Yezidis, or so-called devil worshippers) have the reputation of being very indifferent Muslims. It is a proverb among their neighbors that no saint will ever come out of Kurdistan. In fact, the theology of many consists chiefly in a belief in Jinn, Peris, and Sheyts (devils). It is not from religions hatred, but simply in the exercise of their profession of robbers, that they are the scourge of the Armenian peasantry, whose villages they often attack and plunder. Some of those of higher rank learn Arabic in order to read the Koran; they have, I fancy, no literature of their own, except wild songs; but their national airs are described as being not only melodious, but full of a pathetic melancholy. Their tongue, of which there are many widely diverse dialects, is, so far as I can ascertain, a distinct branch of the Iranian family, though it has adopted a good many Persian words.

The first authentic mention of them seems to be that which we find in the Anabasis of Xenophon [401-399 B.C.], who describes the furious resistance offered to the passage of the Ten Thousand Greeks by the Karduchi of the Upper Tigris, about 150 miles south of Ararat. They were then quite independent of the Great King, and carried on constant war with their neighbors, especially the satrap or prince of Armenia. Nor does it appear that they were ever really subdued by any succeeding potentate, Macedonian or Parthian, Arab or Turk. Later writers call them Gordeyeni or Kordueni; a word which appears also in the Hebrew name Qardu for the country northeast of Mosul, referred to in a preceding chapter. Their name for themselves is said to be Kart or Kartman. At present they profess a sort of loose allegiance to the Sultan, but are practically their own masters, paying little or no tribute, and divided into small clans, each of which obeys its own chief. Individually valiant fighters, they have too little idea of discipline or concerted action to be valuable in war. Those who now dwell in Russian territory, and who number about 10,000, live pretty peaceably, and occasionally, like our friend Jaafar, take service with the stranger, just as the great Saladin, the only world-famous man whom the Kurdish race has produced, did in the armies of the Seljukian princes.

Of our journey back from Erivan to Tiflis, there is little to tell that is worth the telling. As it was, we traversed for the second time the dreary uplands that lie north of Erivan and the stern, silent shores of the Goktcha lake. The lovely wooded glen, which leads from the pass down to the village of Delijan, and which in coming, we had passed through at night. As this glen is a famous place for robbers my experiences there may be worth mentioning. Descending it in the dusk, I had walked on alone before the tarantass, and was taking short cuts from one angle of the winding road to another when the vehicle with my companions in it passed me, and went on ahead, leaving me ten miles to walk. Night fell before I had got far, and with night there appeared an unexpected annoyance in the shape of fierce dogs, which darted out when I passed a dwelling. Every woodman or peasant keeps several of these creatures, of a ferocity that has been famous since the time of Strabo, who says they were able to pull down a lion. Something of this strength they have certainly lost in the eighteen centuries since then, but it was not without difficulty that I could keep them at bay by volleys of stones. They can hardly have taken me for a robber, because the robbers are on excellent terms with the peasantry.

Only yesterday somebody coming this way from Tiflis had seen one or two armed horsemen peering round a hillside, and had escaped them only by galloping to the station, which luckily was near. After this, it was urged by the postmaster, to go on at night would be downright folly. Such is the perversity of human nature that the more these stories were told, the less we believed them; and probably we should have disbelieved them altogether could the usual innkeeper's motive have been discovered. The same stories reappeared; the same advice was even more solemnly tendered. However, it was now near midnight, Tiflis was only two hours away, and our impatience to rest in a civilized bed instead of on a post-house floor made us ready to face dangers more substantial than these seemed to be. "No," we answered; "you may say what you like, but we shall go on; tonight shall see us either murdered or in Tiflis. But if it is any satisfaction to you, or protection to us, give us two or three tchapars to ride beside the tarantass." To this the postmaster demurred, and, after beating about the bush for a good while, at last muttered, "We are more afraid of our own people for you than of the Tatars." After this there was no more to be said; we called for horses, and drove off alone, amid many warnings, first that we would be brought back stripped and wounded, and, secondly, that even if we escaped the band, some stray marauder would certainly climb on to the carriage as we entered Tiflis, and cut away the portmanteau which was tied behind. Nothing, however, happened, except that once or twice in the darkness, for it was as black as a wolf's mouth, with thunderstorms growling in the distance, we ran into Tatar carts making for the city, and were nearly capsized. At 2 AM we entered Tiflis.

Desiring to see something of the coast of Asia Minor, and especially of Batum and Trebizond, we chose the route by Poti, and on the 22nd of September took our seats in the train for the Black Sea. After a good many miles of this narrow glen, the hills recede a little, and the town of Gori appears lying in a small plain at the foot of a castellated rock, where a broad shallow stream comes down from the Caucasus to mingle its sparkling waters with the muddy Kur. From the top of the rock, nearly 200 feet above this plain, there is a magnificent view over the Caucasus to the north, most of the great peaks between Elbruz and Kazbek being visible. At 6:30 AM next morning we started in our host's company for the place we had halted at Gori to see, the Petra of the Caucasus, the rock-city of Uphlis Tzikhé. They led us up the face of the crags by a steep winding path, partly built up of stones, partly cut out of the cliff, to the top, where we found ourselves suddenly in the midst of the city, a city with streets, palaces, shops, private houses, all hewn in the solid rock without a fragment of masonry or a piece of timber anywhere through it. The people who lived here were no mere brutish troglodytes, but a cultivated race.

Returning to Gori, we took the mid-day train, the same, which had brought us from Tiflis yesterday, for the west. We had very nearly missed it, for the ticket for the luggage we had left at the station had been lost. An appeal to let us have the goods despite the want of the ticket would have failed in France or Germany; but with these good-natured people it ultimately succeeded, and they even kept the train, the one train of the day, full of officers and troops, waiting for fifteen minutes while this difficulty of ours was adjusted; an instance of indulgence to unpopular England which a little surprised us. We tried to read, but were too stupid to keep awake, and fell into a slumber broken by hideous dreams. About midnight the lagging train crawled at last into the terminus at Poti, and we drove, under the blackest night I can remember, across the wooden bridge, through seas of mud, to the miserable inn of the most miserable town that ever a traveler was condemned to halt in. Better a hungry bivouac under the snows of Ararat than those dank bedrooms and clammy sheets, heavy with such a smell of putrid slime that one feared to lift the frowsy carpet and find beneath it a bottomless abyss of foulness. The steamers, which run from Poti to Constantinople and Odessa, leave only once a week. So at last we settled down to the conclusion that, if the bar continued impracticable tomorrow, there was nothing for it but to retrace our steps to Tiflis, and go home over the Dariel Pass, and by railway from Vladikavkaz to Odessa, a circuit of about eleven hundred miles. This seemed too absurd to be true.

Chapter X

Except a few turbaned Ottomans, all, both Christians and Turks, wear the red fez, and the poorer ones their brilliant crimson sash, with more or less of picturesque variety in jackets. Nothing strikes a Westerner with more disgust than the way he sees women treated in Mohammedan countries. It is not so much the enforced seclusion that revolts you as the tacit assumption that women are inferior creatures altogether, unfit to be companions for men. Constantinople is one of the few places in the world, which surpasses all expectations. It is more beautiful, more unique, more commanding than any description has prepared you to find it. As everybody knows, it consists of three parts: firstly, Stamboul [Istanbul] proper, the city of Constantine, standing on the site of old Byzantium between the Sea of Marmara and the Golden Horn (a long narrow inlet off the Bosphorus); secondly, Galata, a town which grew up in the later middle ages, also in Europe, but on the opposite or northeast side of the Golden Horn, and Pera, an extension of Galata up the steep hill which rises behind it; and finally, on the other or Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, the towns of Scutari and Kadikeui (Chalcedon), with their far-stretching suburbs. If ever a war is undertaken on behalf of Constantinople, let us understand that is not for the sake of the Turks, but for aesthetic reasons only: to preserve the loveliness of a city that is unique in the world and could never be replaced.

In these circumstances not only war, but conquest also, is obviously against Russia's interest. All this is, of course, perfectly well known and foreseen by intelligent Russians, who cannot understand why foreigners should not credit them with perceiving what is so obvious. It is felt most strongly by the Emperor and his advisers, on whom a

responsibility rests such as no statesman in a parliamentary country is ever required to face. It made them hand back from war when the popular excitement against the Turks, who had perpetrated the Bulgarian massacres and seemed on the point of crushing Serbia and Montenegro, was blazing high over the whole country.

Chapter XI

Though I have not written this book with any political purpose, I am unwilling to lose the opportunity of stating the conclusions to which, as it seems to me, any unprejudiced observer must be led by traveling through Russia and Asiatic Turkey. Seeing is like nothing else. I do not mean that it necessarily gives one new ideas; indeed, the largest and most careful study of these countries could hardly enable a man to develop any views absolutely new on a question, which has been so thoroughly thrashed out during the last few years. But seeing with one's own eyes and hearing people on the spot talk—people who are, so to speak, themselves part of the problem—brings home to one certain facts and principles with a force and clearness which no amount of reading can give. One seems to perceive better what are the main and essential, what the secondary and accidental, factors in the problem. I will therefore try to state, as shortly as possible, the main impressions which this journey gave me as to the condition and prospects of Transcaucasia and the adjoining provinces of Turkey, the attitude of Russia, and the interests of England, premising only that I went with a mind which, so far as it was prejudiced, was prejudiced against Russia, which I had learned from childhood to look upon as the enemy of freedom, the power which oppressed Poland, and had enabled Austria to crush Hungary. Antagonisms of race and religion are far less fierce than in Turkey, Mohammedan races living contentedly under a Christian government. European ideas and inventions are beginning to be known, and may in time lay hold of the still sluggish minds of the people. The two great obstacles to moral and material progress are the want of schools, which the government is just beginning to establish more generally, and the co-existence—I can hardly say mixture—in the population of so many diverse and mutually repellent elements. Each race, Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Persians, Lesghians, Mingrelians, Russians, Germans, is too weak numerically to absorb the rest, and too distinct in religion, language, and habits to blend on equal terms with any of the others. This is a phenomenon that constantly meets one in Eastern countries, and deserves more attention than it has received, as being not only a consequence, but a cause, of their unprogressive state.

The difficulty of fusing these races, or even of uniting them under a common system of law and administration, lies in the fact that the one force which controls them, the only channel in which most of their life flows, is religion. They have no patriotism, in our sense of the word, for they have neither a historical past (being mostly too ignorant for that conception) nor a country they can call exclusively their own. Religion is everything, since it includes their laws, their literature, and their customs, as well as their relation to the unseen world; and religion is not a fusing but a separating, alienating, repellent power. In ancient times there were in Western Asia and Europe pretty nearly as many religions as there were races, but these religions were not mutually exclusive, and required from their believers no hostility to other deities. Hence the ease with which the Roman empire drew so many diverse nations into its bosom, and formed out of them a sort of new imperial nationality. The rise of Christianity altered all this, since it claimed to be a world religion, which could own and brook no rival. Mohammedianism repeats the same claim, with a fierceness which the comparative barbarism of its professors has in the course of time rather intensified than diminished, while Christianity has learned to look with more tenderness or apathy on forms of error. The different sects of Eastern Christians, though united in their aversion to Islam, from which they have suffered so much, have quite enough mutual jealousy to prevent any cordial political union. Greeks, Russians, Armenians, Bulgarians, would each and all of them prefer a Mohammedan government to that of any of the others, if such a government were a less detestable tyranny than that of the Sublime Porte now is. The problem is one far more difficult than Western or Central Europe had to deal with in the Dark Ages, when so many different races lay weltering together on the same territories, for then the omnipresent, all-pervading power of the Church was a unifying and assimilating power, which formed new nations by linking men of different blood and speech in the bond of a common faith. Here the force of religion is a centrifugal force: its lessons are fear and hatred. Even in religious matters, while certain advantages are accorded to the dominant church, the worst evil a Roman Catholic or Protestant suffers is that he is forbidden to proselytize, and, if he marries a wife of a different persuasion, must suffer his children to be brought up in the Orthodox Eastern faith. Hardships, no doubt, these are, but hardships trifling compared to those, which we were recently inflicting on Roman Catholics in Ireland. The Russian Church has never been theologically intolerant, but religion and loyalty or patriotism—words which mean much the same thing to a Russian—are so closely intertwined that one must not expect the lesson of religious liberty to be learnt in a day.

Russia's difficulties in the Caucasian countries, as in her other Asiatic provinces, arise from the want of two things, men and money. She has not got men to spare for colonization, seeing that, in addition to Siberia, Turkestan, and her newly acquired vast and fertile territories on the river Amur, she has far more land at home than there are people to cultivate it. When he can have a rich farm on the Don or Lower Volga for next to nothing, the peasant is not likely to cross the Caucasus or the deserts of Central Asia.

As a way to conclude James Bryce's chapter and give him honor, here are some memorable quotes from him:

“The worth of a book is to be measured by what you can carry away from it.”

“There is a hearty Puritanism in the view of human nature which pervades the instrument of 1787 [United States Constitution]. It is the work of men who believed in original sin, and were resolved to leave open for transgressors no door which they could possibly shut.”

“Medicine, the only profession that labors incessantly to destroy the reason for its existence.”

“Three-fourths of the mistakes a man makes are made because he does not really know what he thinks he knows.”

