

A contributor to the Auckland *Herald* writes:—

In last Wednesday's *Herald* a Reuter's London telegram announced that "intelligence is to hand that a series of avalanches have occurred at Mount Ararat, in Armenia. A number of villages have been completely destroyed, and hundreds of people have been killed." It is surprising that no reference was made to a remarkable alleged discovery in connection with one of these storms of avalanches, and which is referred to in the following extract from the *Levant Herald*, just received, being nothing less than that of the supposed remains of Noah's Ark. The copy of our Oriental contemporary must have joined the mail from Constantinople at Alexandria, which may account for its anticipating our receipt of the English journals commenting on this most remarkable item of intelligence. Our contemporary says:—

We have received from our correspondent at Trebizond intelligence of the return of the Commissioners appointed by the Turkish Government to inquire into the reported destruction of Moshul, Ashak, and Bayazid by avalanches, and to render relief to the distressed villagers, who had suffered so severely from the unusual inclemency of the season. They found the destruction to have not been exaggerated, and the distress was very great. But the expedition was fortunate in making a discovery that cannot fail to be of the deepest interest to all the whole civilised world, for amid the fastnesses of one of the glens of Mount Ararat they came upon a gigantic structure of some very dark wood, imbedded at the foot of one of the glaciers, with one end protruding, and which they believed to be none other than the old ark in which Noah, with his family, navigated the waters of the deluge. The place where the discovery was made is about five days' journey from Trebizond, in the department of Van, in Armenia, and about four leagues from the Persian frontier. The glen is one of the sources of a tributary of the river Aras, which flows into the Caspian. The villagers of Bayazid, which was situated about a league off, had seen this strange object for nearly six years, but were deterred by a strong superstitious fear from approaching it, as there was a rumour very generally believed that strange voices had been heard within it, and it was said that some young men more daring than the others who had approached, had seen a spirit of fierce aspect gazing out of a hole or door in the upper portion of the structure. Nothing deterred by the fears of the villagers, the Commissioners, accompanied by their personal attendants, proceeded to examine it, the villagers positively refusing to approach even the neighbourhood of the glacier in which it was imbedded. The way led through a dense forest, and the travellers were obliged to follow the course of the stream, wading sometimes up to the waist in water, which was intensely cold, being from the melting glacier. After a toilsome journey of three or four hours, during which they incurred considerable danger from the masses of snow impending from the heights above, they were rewarded by the sight of a huge dark mass projecting twenty or thirty feet from the glacier, on the left hand side of the ravine. They found that it was formed of a wood not grown in these elevated districts, nor nearer than in the low hot valleys of the Euphrates, where it is known by the natives as "izim," said to be the ancient gopher wood of scripture. It was in a good state of preservation, being painted or stained on the outside with a dark brown pigment, and constructed of great strength. It was a good deal broken at the angles, from being subjected to somewhat rough usage by the moraines, during the slow descent of the glacier from the lofty peaks towering away beyond the head of the valley to a height of over seventeen thousand feet, a process which, considering the nature of the country and the slow paces at which these snow rivers travel, especially in the higher altitudes,

which, considering the nature of the country and the slow paces at which these snow rivers travel, especially in the higher altitudes, must have required thousands of years.

The projecting portion seemed about forty or fifty feet in height, but to what length it penetrated into the glacier they could form no estimate. Effecting an entrance through one of the broken corners, the explorers found it filled for the greater part with ice, the interior being partitioned off into compartments of about twelve or fifteen feet high, into three of which alone, they were able to make their way, owing to the mass of frozen substance with which these were filled, and also caused by their fears of the structure collapsing with the superincumbent and overhanging mass of the huge glacier. The Commissioners, one of whom is an Englishman, Captain Gascoyne, formerly attached to the British Embassy in this city, and well known as a scientific investigator, are fully confident that it is the Ark of Noah, and they support the position by maintaining that having been enveloped in snow and frozen, it has been kept in a state of perfect preservation; that having rested on one of the peaks of the Ararat range, as described in Scripture, the Ark must have been lying on the soil, for the waters had covered the whole earth, and the tops of the highest mountains, "and all the high hills that were under the whole heavens were covered; fifteen cubits upward, did the water prevail, and the mountains were covered." In these circumstances the snow that ordinarily covered this lofty mountain, for it is 17,230 feet in height, would have all been melted away by the waters of the flood when Noah first grounded on the peak. But as the waters were slowly receding for some five months, and Noah and his family following the receding waters, gradually made their way towards the lowlands, the mountain would of course resume its great height over sea-level, and, in consequence, be again covered with snow, which must at once have enveloped the Ark as it lay—it may be supposed—on the slope, near the summit of the peak. As perpetual snow now covers Mount Ararat for more than half-way down, it is manifest that the Ark must have been kept in a perfect state of preservation, while slowly, during the silent lapse of four or five thousand years, creeping down, after the manner of the glaciers, into the valley below, there to appear in these latter ages to discomfit the scoffer, and confirm the sure word of revelation. The Commissioners had already reported the discovery to His Majesty, and at the instance of the German Ambassador, prompt steps had been taken to protect from destruction, and to preserve a relic so interesting to the whole world, as it was rumoured that an enterprising American traveller had opened negotiations, in the hope of purchasing the Ark from the Pasha of the district, in order to have it removed to the United States for exhibition. It is hoped that this most interesting relic may be preserved to the world, and as the surrounding country is of an exceedingly mountainous character, and the defiles leading towards either Trebizond or Batoum are both narrow and intricate, that no attempt will be made to remove it out of the district, where there is no doubt every Government in the civilised world would contribute to its careful protection and preservation, as the most ancient and remarkable monument of antiquity to be found in any part of the world.