

FROZEN ON MOUNT ARARAT.

Legend That It Cannot Be Climbed Falsified by an Explorer's Death.

From the London Standard.

Ararat, we learn, must now be reckoned among the mountains which have exacted a toll of life from explorers. Some of the geologists who attended the congress at St. Petersburg during the summer appear to have extended their trip to the Caucasus (which was among the attractions of the gathering) as far as Ararat, and to have attempted the ascent, but, according to a telegram, one of the party, Prof. Stoeber, from Vladikavas, has been frozen to death. This misfortune will add to the awe with which the mountain is generally regarded in its immediate neighborhood. For centuries it was considered inaccessible; not because it presented any special difficulties, but because it was deemed to be a sacred place. From a very early time it has been firmly believed that portions of the ark still remained on the summit. This is affirmed by, at least, one Greek Father of early date. Adventurous climbers are said to have been overpowered by an irresistible inclination to slumber, which, by delaying their advance, has frustrated their hopes of reaching the summit. This was considered a clear proof of some supernatural guardianship, though a more skeptical age would propound another explanation. But there was yet a legend in reserve to confute the doubters. A monk in the monastery at its foot desired so ardently to gaze on the sacred relics that he returned again and again to the attack, always to fall asleep. But, at last, an angelic form stood by him as he slumbered, and told him that man might not tread on such holy ground, but that his faith should be rewarded with a fragment from the timbers of the ark. When he awoke, it lay by his side, and is still preserved, so the story runs, in the monastery.

So strong is this belief that not many years ago an eminent Armenian ecclesiastic, when told by an Englishman that he had just returned from the summit of Ararat, beamed upon him with a benevolent smile of superior knowledge, and gravely replied, "That is impossible; no one can ascend Ararat." But of late years—notwithstanding this simple way of settling the question—the summit has been several times reached. The first to make the ascent was Parrot, a professor at Dorpat, in 1820. Doubts have been thrown upon his story, but there is not the slightest reason

cent was Parrot, a professor at Dorpat, in 1820. Doubts have been thrown upon his story, but there is not the slightest reason for questioning its accuracy. As he relates in his well-known book, "A Journey to Ararat," he twice failed, but was successful at his third attempt. He was followed at rather long intervals by other explorers, among whom was the eminent geologist Abich, in 1845, and in that year the first Englishman, Mr. Digby Seymour, arrived on the summit. An ascent was made in 1876 by Professor Bryce. This was certainly not the least memorable, for his companions became exhausted, and were obliged to halt, while he made his way up for rather more than four hours quite alone. Fortunately of the two routes by which the summit generally has been reached—the northwestern and the southeastern—he had selected the latter, where the snow is less steep and is not so likely to make much step-cutting necessary. The ascent has been repeated several times since then, but the climb is undoubtedly long and toilsome, and the cold may be, as it has been on this occasion, a serious danger.

We do not yet know whether Professor Stoeber became exhausted, or whether the party were caught in a storm. Alpine climbers know that the cold can be a formidable foe, even on a bright day, on the upper part of Mont Blanc, and the sad fate of travelers who were lost in the mists and died of exhaustion is still among recent memories. But Ararat is considerably higher than Mont Blanc, for its summit only just falls short of 17,000 feet, and the severity of the cold is doubtless increased by the fact that its rocks on the upper part offer hardly any shelter, and the whole mountain is remarkably isolated. It crowns the Armenian plateau, rising from the plain of the Aras, about 3,000 feet above sea level, a huge, almost solitary, elongated mass, which culminates in two peaks, Little Ararat, rather more than 12,900 feet high, and the vast domed Great Ararat. Both these—indeed, the whole mass—are of volcanic origin, but no trace of a crater remains. The summit is a dome of snow, but the last rocks which crop out are indubitably volcanic, reddish and grayish scoria. In fact, lava or ash is met with everywhere during the ascent. The materials, so far as they have been examined, do not exhibit any great variety. They belong to a species of rock which is named andesite by geologists, because it abounds in the South American chain. Doubtless the desire of studying this remarkable massif, and the hope of enjoying a marvelous panorama, prompted the ascent—undertaken, perhaps, a little too late in the year—which has ended so disastrously.