

Mount Ararat

The Christian Science Monitor (1908-Current file); Apr 5, 1917;
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Christian Science Monitor (1908-1999)
pg. 20

remain inaccessible. Even Sir John Mandeville's monk never really reached the top. The precious plank from the ark, which is still preserved in the treasury of Etschmiadzin, was vouchsafed to him as a reward for his persistent, devoted, but altogether vain efforts to accomplish his purpose. On the 27th of September, 1820, however, one Dr. Johann Jakob Parrot climbed Ararat, reached the "secret top" and set his feet at last on the "dome of eternal ice." Since then many people have climbed it. Many, too, have sought to describe the mountain; to convey some impression of the solitary grandeur of the great peak, wreathed about by day, as it always is, with ever-changing clouds, or as it is seen at night, when the clouds have vanished in the cooling air, and the mountain stands out ruggedly against the steel-blue darkness of the Eastern sky.

Mount Ararat

GREAT ARARAT, which shouldered its way some 17,000 feet up into the Armenian sky, and looks down on the lands of the "Tsar, the Sultan, and the Shah," although so truly the rallying point, as it were, for the Armenian people, is quite unknown to the native Armenian by this name. The people who actually dwell within sight of its great snow-capped dome, who look out towards it over the plain from Erivan, some thirty miles away to the north, or from the frontier mountain slopes away to the south, call it by a variety of names. If they are Armenians they call it "Massis"; if Turks, "Aghri Dagh," and if Persians, "Koh-i-Nuh," or the "Mountain of Noah." There are really, of course, two mountains, or, rather, there is one vast mass out of which rise two peaks, "their bases confluent at a height of 8800 feet, their summits about seven miles apart." Little Ararat, upon whose slopes it is that the territories of the three kingdoms actually meet, is some 4000 feet lower than its big brother; but none the less, with its 12,840 feet, it is "none so little."

The great bulk of the two mountains is curiously isolated. It rises on the north and east out of the plain of Aras, here some 2500 to 3000 feet above the sea, and on the southwest sinks to the plateau of Bayezid. It is only on the northwest that it is connected with any other mountains, and on this side a huge ridge, some 7000 feet high, links it up with a range of mountains running westward, and finally merging into the great range of the Bingöl Dagh or Northeastern Taurus.

Ararat, therefore, from its very position, would be likely to seize hold of the imagination of men, and there has grown up around its vast bulk a store of legend and tradition which is truly remarkable in extent and detail. The great mass of this lore concerns, as might be expected, the tradition that the top of Ararat was the resting place of the Ark. There are many tales of the valiant efforts made, from time to time, to climb the mountain in order to find the ark which men declared was, at times, clearly visible from the plain below. Sir John Mandeville, "of pious and veracious memory," as Lord Bryce puts it, in describing his travels eastward from Trebizond, speaks of a "Hille that men clepen Ararathe; but the Jews," he adds. "Clepen it Teneez, where Noes Schipp rested; and zit is upon that Montayne; and men may see it a ferr in cleer wedre." And then he goes on to say how men had been found who declared that they had climbed the mountain, and had "seen and touched the Shipp, and put here fyngres in the parties where the Feend went out whan Noe seyde 'Benedicite.'" Sir John, however, insists that the assertions of such men are not to be credited, for no one had really ever climbed the mountain, nor ever could climb it, by reason of the "gret plentee of Snow that is alle weyes on that Montayne nouthur Somer ne Winter; so that no man may gon up there; ne nevere man did, si the tyme of Noe; saf a Monk that be the grace of God broughte one of the Plankes down, that zit is in the Mynstre at the foot of the Montayne."

So, for many centuries, the top of Ararat did, indeed,