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A Picnic in Palestine

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(p. 197) CHAPTER XVI. SHECHEM.

THE city that we call Shechem is known now by the name of Nablous. When the Romans captured it, they called it Neapolis, which means New City, the same as Naples. You can readily see how the pronunciation might, in the mouths of the natives, become Nablous. It is a short ride from the well to the city going west. On our right rises Mount Ebal, and on the left Gerizim. On the way up we passed numbers of Turkish soldiers, for this is one of their principal stations, and the Governor lives here. In passing through the Ottoman Empire, it is necessary to have a pass; not that there is any danger of bodily harm, but because the Turkish government wants you to have a pass, in order that they may read it every day or two, and charge you for reading it. I should think that the passport system of that country would yield a very pretty revenue at every town. Some petty officer would come straggling into the camp, and demand our passports, and would return them with some - outlandish scribbling on the back, and collect a fee from each one of us. When we arrived at this city, we found it to be quite an industrious place; there are over twenty soap factories here. It seems to me there could not be a more useful industry in all the land. If they had a soap factory every hundred yards from one end of Palestine to the other, I should think they would find ready use for the whole business in washing these miserable, dirty wretches that throng every highway, pack the streets and crowd the houses.

The sun was sinking down in the west as we entered the town; but our day's ride was not over by a good deal, for we were informed that the Samaritans were up on the top of Gerizim celebrating the Passover. There are three districts of country in Palestine,—Judea, Samaria and Galilee.

(p. 198) Samaria lies between the other two, and its name would indicate that its population are Samaritans, and so they were years ago, but these strange people, having nothing to do with other people, have married and intermarried and kept themselves from all the rest of the earth until only one hundred and forty-eight remain in all that section. There are no Samaritans even in the city of Samaria; they all live here in Nablous. It was a very steep, and at times, dangerous ascent, but our little horses climbing like goats, and as sure-footed as mules reached the top in safety, and we found ourselves still clinging to their backs. When we paused in front of the little camp of the remnant of this historic people our genial conductor, who had made many tours through Palestine, was acquainted with the patriarch. This old worthy emerged from his tent, and looked exactly like the pictures of Aaron I had seen when a boy; his long white robe held to the waist by a sash, full flowing beard and turbaned head, and withal a dignified air which told you that he was the head of his race, and the chief among his people. He and Dr. Crunden kissed each other; it is a custom of that country for men to kiss each other—a custom which I am thankful to say has not yet reached

America. We were invited into the camp and shown the pit where the lamb was roasted; for they still roast a lamb and eat it as they stand with girded loins and staff in hand ready for the hasty journey, just as the children of Israel did in Egypt thousands of years ago. We also had the rare opportunity of seeing the famous ancient manuscript of the Pentateuch. It was encased in a little embellished bronze box, the door of which only was open, and we were permitted to look in at the strange hieroglyphics. We could wonder at it, and look wise, as some of our people do when they go to hear Patti sing in Italian, or Paderewski perform his wonderful feats on the piano; but we were none the wiser, though we were gratified to have seen it. You know, their Bible embraces only the five books of Moses,

But of all I saw on this high mountain in the little camp, there was nothing that so impressed me as the splotch of blood over the door of each tent; and when I asked what it meant, the reply was, "It is the blood of the lamb." I wonder if the death angel (p. 199) should spread his broad wings over your home to-night and tell you that your hour had come would he find the blood of the Lamb above your door; would he find you trusting in the true Lamb of God whose blood cleanseth from all sin; would he say to you that his only mission was to invite you to a higher and a better life.

One day I stood in the infirmary of Spurgeon's Orphanage talking to a little crippled boy; and when I asked him what he did to amuse himself he pointed to a large printed hymn suspended on the wall, and said: "I am learning that." And this was the hymn:

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

And then the blessed truth is for all, for "whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life."- A friend of mine in the battle of Cedar Mountain in Virginia was assisting in gathering the wounded the night after the battle, when he heard through the darkness the groans of a dying man, and hastening to his side he asked him if he was badly hurt. He said: "Yes; I am too badly hurt to be moved; I am dying now." Running to a fire which he saw burning near by he came back with a torch, and by fanning it in the air produced a blaze which showed him the fair face of a young and handsome boy; he was only sixteen years of age. "Can I do anything for you?" said my friend. "No;" he answered, "there is Only one thing,—I would like to know how I can be saved. Mother used to tell me that Jesus said that 'Whosoever would come to Him' could be saved." "Shall I bring you some water?" "It is not that I want; it is the water of life; if I could only know that that was for me." My friend said that he remembered having seen on the last page of the New Testament that this invitation was given, and said to the dying man that if he had the Bible he could read it to him. "You will find one in my pocket," he said, "one that my mother gave me." Putting his fingers into his pocket, he said, his fingers sank into the warm blood as he drew the book forth all stained with the blood of the boy. He turned hastily to the last page (p. 200) and read that word which has been a blessing to so many: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "I will, I will!" said the boy; "I will, I will! Please take that book; you will find my mother's name and address, and my name. Write to her, and send it to her, and tell her that I died trusting in Jesus, and will meet her in heaven."

God be thanked for the glorious message that has cheered and saved so many in this sin-cursed world: "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." While we were on this mountain we visited the remains of the old Samaritan temple. You remember the woman said at the well, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;" and so they did. There

are stones of the ancient temple yet remaining where the fathers worshipped and the children worshipped, and will doubtless continue to worship until the last one is left, who will probably ascend Mount Gerizim, and turning his eyes towards the setting sun will yield up his spirit to the God who gave it. We descended the mountain and rode through the town into our camp. A Turkish guard was placed around us that night and we slept securely, but not more so than if we had not had them, for I have yet to see any special service that they have ever rendered.

The only Baptist missionary that we found in all the land lives in this place. His name is El Karey; he has been here for years, and is sustained by the Baptists of Great Britain. He preaches to people in his own dwelling, and conducts a school for boys and girls. At our invitation Mr. El Karey came to dinner with us in the evening, and afterwards gave us quite an interesting account of his work.

The people in this country look with the greatest reverence upon a man who knows anything about healing the sick; and therefore the missionary or the traveler who can alleviate the sufferings of the people is regarded with superstitious admiration and respect. Dr. J. M. Fort of our party had occasion to administer medicine to one or two of our servants, with good effect. The result of it was that wherever we came, the news went abroad that a healer was with our party, and the afflicted were brought that the doctor might do them good. Here in the (p. 201) camp at Nablous the sick were brought to him, and there was nothing that we had in our possession which was so eagerly sought after as his medicines. Mr. El Karey was earnest and persistent in begging the doctor to give to him his medical supply. Some one had sent Dr. Crunden a very handsome case of homeopathic medicines, which he turned over to Dr. Fort, who, although a physician of the other school of medicine, finding his own supplies exhausted, was quite willing to appropriate the practice of homoeopathy.

The missionary told us that this was the only Baptist station in all Palestine, and said that Shechem was one of the cities of refuge. He was familiar with the records of the Samaritans, and said that their priests taught that Jesus was born of humble parents, was a carpenter, became an impostor, and was crucified for his arrogance. There are twenty thousand people in this city, nineteen thousand of whom are Mohammedans in name. Our stay at Nablous was altogether full of interest and very much enjoyed.

We named our camp El Karey, and bidding adieu to him and this ancient city, left in the early morning ere the sun had risen over Ebal. As we rode along over the slopes of this last-named mountain, we thought of the times when the Hebrews with their tribes on each mountain declared the blessings and the cursings, the echoes of which seem hardly to have died away in the presence of those two mighty places, Ebal and Gerizim, which stand there to tell of the days gone by.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

This reference is not located in *A Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition, Revised, Expanded, and Annotated*, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer, ATLA Bibliography, No. 51, **The Scarecrow Press, Inc.** Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Oxford. 2005

Henry Marvin Wharton was born at Western View, Culpeper County, Va., Sept. 11, 1848-1928) He is the son of Malcon H. and Susan R. Wharton. Both his parents were noted for

their intelligence, piety, and influence in the community. Henry was the youngest of eight children. He authored a number of works.

The Christian Party left New York 25th of February, 1891

It is likely that the party's visit to Nablus was in April 1891.

OUR PARTY.

Mr. T. J. NOTTINGHAM, Norfolk, Va.
Mrs. T. J. NOTTINGHAM, Norfolk, Va.
Miss TILLIE BARLOW, Portsmouth, Va.
Miss HATTIE MINTER, Portsmouth, Va.
Rev. JOHN MITCHELL, Hexlena, N. C.
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