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Illustrations of Jerusalem and Mount Sinai;

Including the most interesting Sites between Grand Cairo and Berout.

From Drawings by **F. Arundale**, Architect.

With a Descriptive of His Tour and Residence in Those Remarkable Countries.

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[By Francis Arundale]

(p. 89).....

The delight with which I hailed the dawn of the following day may be more easily imagined than described. We left this wretched spot about eight o'clock in the morning, when our route lay over a hilly country. After proceeding a short distance, we passed a small valley, called Khan Leban; here were the remains of a khan, and also spring of fine water. Maundrell speaks of the ancient Bethel having been possibly near this spot; but a ruined village and monastery are very vague guides to assist in fixing an ancient locality. On either side of our route lay villages. While anxiously looking for Mount Gerizim, at the foot of which lies the town of Nablous, my speculations were damped by a considerable fall of rain. We however reached the gates at half past five P.M. The badness of the weather prevented us from appreciating the beauty of the gardens by which the town is surrounded, and drove us to seek shelter as soon as possible. This we first obtained at the house of a Jew, who received us with great kindness and hospitality; but the place was so small and filthy, that we were obliged to apply to the governor for accommodation, who promised to find us good (p. 90) lodging the next morning. We were therefore obliged to return to our first quarters, where it was impossible to obtain a wink of sleep, fatigued as we then were. The quantity of vermin by which we were attacked was perfectly incredible.

On the following day, the governor performed his promise, by providing us with an apartment which was clean, and not without some specimens of Turkish decoration. Nor did his civility stop here; he added to the obligation by sending us our meals from his own table, accompanied by an assurance of willingness to assist us in any respect in his power. After calling to thank him for this agreeable and rather unusual hospitality, we proceeded to examine this curious and interesting town.

It is situated about thirty-four miles to the north of Jerusalem. Within the town I observed six mosques; the principal of which was formerly a Christian church. The doorway of entrance into this building is curious, and well worthy of notice. It has a porch supported by Corinthian columns, on which is a highly enriched pointed arch in the Saracenic style of architecture. We also visited some of the baths, which are good; and the bazaars, all possessing a degree of splendour which we had hardly expected. There are also many cotton and soap manufactories.

The present population of Nablous is estimated at about ten thousand. There seems to be but little doubt that the Shechem of the Scriptures occupied this site, from the bearings of Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, between which both the ancient Shechem and the modern city lay. This is ascertained by the fact that it was from these hills that Joshua, by the command of God, given to Moses, read the blessings and cursings to the Israelites, Joshua, viii, 33, 34.¹ Maundrell mentions the Samaritans as existing at the time of his visit, in the year 1697. His account is so interesting that I cannot do better than give it to the reader. "I took the opportunity to go and visit the chief priest of the Samaritans, in order to discourse with (p. 91) him respecting this and some other difficulties in the Pentateuch. As for the difference between the Hebrew and Samaritan copy, Deuteronomy, xxvii. 4, the priest pretended that the Jews had

¹ From Gerizim the former were pronounced, and the latter from Ebal.

maliciously altered the text, out of odium to the Samaritans, putting for Gerizim, Ebal, upon no other account but only because the Samaritans worshipped in the former mountain; which they would have, for that reason, not to be the true place appointed by God for his worship and sacrifice."

The founder of this sect, so remarkable for its inveterate enmity against the Jews, was Sanballat, a Cuthite. Like the Sadducees, the Samaritans rejected the whole of the Old Testament, excepting the Pentateuch. Their temple is said to have been on Mount Gerizim, whither they retired, after joining the Jews in a revolt against the Roman government in Judea. The Roman General, Cercalis, blockaded them in this position with six hundred horse and three hundred foot; but they obstinately refused every condition of surrender, and were nearly all put to the sword under the Emperor Justinian. In spite of this unsuccessful attempt, they again revolted, with chances considerably improved; having increased in strength, and chosen a desperate leader, they made a vigorous effort for their freedom; by which, as Gibbon says, one hundred thousand either perished or were sold into slavery.

The remnant, however, of this people was never totally exterminated, and under Mount Gerizim they continued to take up their abode so late as the year 1776. Their Chief Priest at Nablous held a correspondence with the learned Scaliger, defending the Samaritan against the Hebrew Pentateuch, which, though differing so slightly from each other, had caused a great schism between the two churches.

Their religious code was extremely simple, and ran thus—They were to believe in one God, and the laws of his servant Moses; they were to practice circumcision, the inviolable observance of the Sabbath, the Passover, the Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles, with the solemn (p. 92) fast and expiation; but no sacrifices could be offered anywhere but on Mount Gerizim.

The ruined tomb of a Sheikh, and the remains of a tank, is all that this once sacred and celebrated mountain presented to gratify our curiosity. It is, however, extremely probable that judicious excavation in this mountain might restore to light some relics of the ancient Samaritan temple.

This Temple was probably nearly or entirely levelled with the ground during the persecution under Justinian, and has never since risen from its ruins. Still some of the foundations might be discovered, sufficient, perhaps, to assist the antiquary in forming an opinion respecting the style and extent of the edifice. Very few of the sect are to be found at Nablous.

Extending our walk without the city toward Mount Gerizim, we passed a mosque said to have been erected over Joseph's sepulchre. At the foot of Mount Ebal several caverns may be observed, evidently tombs.

This practice of burying in lateral excavations in the rock is of most remote antiquity, as we are informed in numberless passages of the Old and New Testament. Among the most remarkable are that which relates that Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah before Mamri; Joshua on the side of the hill of Gaash in Ephraim; Genesis, xxv. 9; Joshua, xxiv. 30. There is a great difference of opinion among travellers respecting the situation of Jacob's Well, where our Saviour held the memorable conversation with the Samaritan woman. That without the present town, and known by the name of El Beer Samaria, seems to correspond with that spoken of John, iv. 6. It is in the midst of a field, which would answer to the "parcel of ground" bought by Jacob: and at a small distance are several sepulchral excavations. On approaching the well, a stone vault is all that presents itself; this is filled up with stones and rubbish, but at the bottom is an excavation in the rock, covered in a great measure by a large stone. It was dry, and appeared, from the time of the descent of a stone, (p. 93) to be of considerable depth. Mauudrell makes it thirty-five feet. Here is also a modern building over a well; this is known by the name of Beer Yussuf; what is called the Beer Yacoob being within the town; which, if the modern Nablous corresponds at all with Shechem, must be a complete disproof of the identity of the modern with the ancient Beer Yacoob.

The next place of interest near Nablous is the ancient Sebaste, which we reached in about three quarters of an hour; the road taking a N. W. direction. We passed a spring of good water, which bears the name of Beer Sheba. This might have been the position of the well dug by Isaac's servant, recorded Genesis, xxvi. 32. At a short distance from this place, we passed the remains of a Roman aqueduct; and at about two hours from Nablous we arrived at the ruins of a church in the Norman style of architecture, said to be built over the spot where John the Baptist was beheaded. The exterior of the apsis is of an

octangular form, and enriched with circular and pointed arches alternately. Here I was shown by the Sheikh of the village, who also acted as cicerone, a vault, probably an ancient place of interment, which is now dignified by representing the prison of John the Baptist. It was not more than ten feet square, and had long niches in the walls. A stone door was also lying against the wall; from which the most probable conclusion which we can draw is, that it was a place of sepulture.

The Sheikh attempted to explain the fragments of rows of columns which lay scattered about.

The principal colonnade extended from E. to W., one extremity terminating in the door of the church. The shafts are plain, but none of the capitals exist.

Some fragments of a bad Ionic are to be seen about; this probably was the order in which the whole structure was erected.

This city was rebuilt by Herod the Great, and Josephus states that he here erected a temple; but, excepting the fragments of about sixty columns, (p. 94) no Roman architecture remains. The place, however, must have been much injured during the crusades, and the reverses of fortune, according to the dominant part of the moment, tended equally to obliterate every trace of ancient grandeur. Cross and Crescent, Saracen or Templar, left behind them the same desolation. The Crusaders frequently employed the remains of Roman buildings which they found, as materials for their own churches; and many of these later erections have followed their Roman predecessors.

Here is a large ruined convent of Gothic architecture, to which the above account will apply: and on an elevated ground is shown the remains of walls, which are reported to have formed part of the citadel. This, being strongly fortified, and commanding a valley on every side, must have been a position of great strength and importance.

On returning to Nablous, we determined to attempt the journey to Djeraash, which lies on the other side of Jordan, and is a spot seldom visited by travellers from its situation and from the difficulty of access which it presents. It was visited by Burckhardt, who described the Roman remains which it contains as very interesting.

Having engaged a man to accompany us with four mules, for which we paid about ten dollars, we soon quitted the pleasanter part of the road, and began to ascend the mountains, where, in consequence of the late rains, we found the road almost impracticable. Slowly and toilsomely we proceeded, till, on descending, we entered the valley of the Jordan, many parts of which were inundated. The passage of the river we found it would be madness to attempt; so, after resting in a cavern for the night, we were obliged to return to Nablous, blessing ourselves, moreover, that we were fortunate enough to escape the parties of straggling Arabs which infest the banks of the Jordan, and with whom a rencontre would be dangerous, if not fatal.

We were also thankful that no ill consequences but fatigue had resulted (p. 95) from being exposed for two days and two nights among these dreary mountains. We remained three more days at Nablous, during which time the governor still continued to show us every attention, but which were useless and tedious in the extreme. The continual rains entirely preventing any excursions, we took the very earliest opportunity of favourable weather to continue our journey to Acre; for which distance we agreed with a muleteer to provide us with six mules for about eight dollars.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

These references are not listed 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

Francis Arundale (9 Aug 1807 - 9 Sep 1853), an architectural draughtsman, was born in London. Visited Nablus Dec. 2, 1833. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Arundale . Year visited 1833.