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**Our Holiday in the East**  
**By Mrs. George Sumner**  
**Edited by Rev. George Henry Sumner**  
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(pg. 173).....

Nablous (the ancient Shechem) is about half an-hour's ride from Jacob's Well. It is one of the most picturesque towns in Palestine, nestling in the gorge formed by Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, and embedded in groves and gardens of olives, oranges, citrons, figs, walnuts, mulberries, pomegranates, vines, and plums. Streams of water flow in abundance on all sides, and the sound of their constant ripple is very refreshing to the ear. Nablous is a sort of oasis in the grim, bare, rocky, mountainous scenery, as Damascus is in the arid plain.

(pg. 174) It so happened that there was a Mohammedan *fete* on the day we were there, and the public olive-garden near the town was crowded with hundreds of little Moslem children, playing about, in rainbow-coloured chemises, girded round the waist with a sash or band, while the white-robed mothers were quietly watching them. It was like a garden of sprightly and moving flowers, or a swarm of butterflies.

Our ride through Nablous was very curious. The street is a mile long, lined on each side with bazaars. The paving was very uneven, and we rode in single file at a great risk of falling, for our horses slipped at every step. The narrow street was crowded with the usual glorious confusion of natives, camels, mules, and dogs, and we had some difficulty in threading our way through the motley crowd. The people of Nablous, being chiefly Mohammedan fanatics, scowled at us as we passed along, but did not openly insult us, though we were told that a year or two ago it would not have been safe for us to have ridden through the town as we did. Our camp was pitched on high ground quite at the south-west of the town, and so we had to run the gauntlet of the whole population of the place.

(pg. 175) Mr. Karey, a native Christian who is zealous in good works among the inhabitants of Nablous, called on us soon after we had dismounted from our horses, and very kindly lionized us during our short stay.

We had intended to have gone up to the top of Gerizim, but unfortunately the day was very misty, and we reluctantly gave up the expedition, for we thought our time would be better occupied in the town. We spoke to Mr. Karey about the difficulty of hearing the blessings and the curses from the two sides of the valley, and he told us that only a fortnight before he had gone up Gerizim, while a friend of his ascended Ebal, and each had heard clearly what was said on the opposite mountain. The air in Syria is peculiarly sound-conducting.

Mr. Karey is a member of the Supreme Council of Seventeen, under the Turkish Governor. He said that he had a school for boys and girls, which was well attended; that they were taught daily out of the Bible, and that everything was done to steep them in the knowledge of Christianity; but unfortunately no open profession is called for, nor are they baptized, or they would, he said, be murdered by their (pg. 176) Moslem relatives for their apostasy. Mothers' meetings are also held for Mohammedan women every week. The average attendance, according to Mr. Karey's statements, is as high as eighty. He reads *Line upon Line* to them, and questions them upon it, and they seem thankful to be instructed. But the work is essentially one of faith and hope, and it is impossible not to feel the deepest regret that they

do not openly acknowledge their faith by being brought to Holy Baptism, and thus enrolled into the fellowship of Christ's Church.

Better days will come, it is hoped, both religiously and politically, to this oppressed country. Religious liberty is abhorrent to the Mohammedans, but we must, as Christians, try more zealously to raise up the banner of the Cross in the midst of a land so dear to our Lord, and carry out His last orders to the letter. Only thus will light break forth out of present darkness, and Palestine take its rightful place amongst Christian kingdoms. If the Holy Land were governed by Christian rulers, a great religious revival would in all probability soon begin.

It was quite refreshing, in walking round the (pg. 177) town, to pass many fountains, hills and reservoirs of water. The rippling and trickling sounded sweet and pleasant. Gardens and overhanging trees adorn the narrow pathways, in which the bulbul sweetly sings, without a rival amongst his unmusical compeers.

Through dim, arched, winding streets, Mr. Karey led us up a narrow flight of steps to a court-yard, deliciously fragrant with orange trees, in the corner of which was the Samaritan Synagogue, little more than a whitewashed room with a small dome. There are not more than one hundred and seventy Samaritans remaining at Nablous, and none elsewhere. They believe in one God, the Pentateuch, Moses as lawgiver and prophet, and a coming Messiah. They celebrate the Passover on Mount Gerizim, a ceremony which Dean Stanley has graphically described, and also keep the feasts of Pentecost and the Atonement. Mr. Karey introduced us to the Samaritan high-priest, dressed in a purple robe and crimson turban, who sacredly guards the celebrated MS. copies of the Pentateuch. On the left-hand side as you enter the building is the Mizbah, a recess hidden by a sort of coloured curtain. Within this holy of holies (pg. 178) the three sacred rolls are kept. The high-priest went behind the hanging and brought out for our inspection one of the manuscripts, written on parchment, and rolled on two rollers. It was enclosed in a brass and silver case, and the whole was carefully folded up in a silk wrapper, richly embroidered. The priest handled it very reverently and devoutly, and placed it on a stand. We asked to see another of the rolls, and he unlocked a cupboard, and brought out a second manuscript, still older, and enclosed in a more highly ornamented brass case. He read aloud some parts of it, and then we asked to see the oldest and most sacred scroll of all, the roll of Abishua, but he declined to bring it out. It is only shown to the Samaritans once a-year, on the day of Atonement.

At night our camp was guarded by four Turkish soldiers, who kept up a series of dismal signal-whistles, the one answering the other, to prove that each was wakeful and watching.

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#### **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

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**George Henry Sumner (1824-1909)** was the Suffragan Bishop of Guildford at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Henry\\_Sumner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Henry_Sumner)