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**The Life and Correspondence
of Thomas Valpy French
First Bishop of Lahore
By Rev. Herbert Alfred Birks
Volume 2
London
John Murray, Albemarle Street
1895**

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To MRS. FRENCH. Nablous, Nov. 6.

This morning I have been examining the schools of the Nablous mission, both boys' and girls': there were some forty in the former and thirty in the latter; both acquitted themselves much to my satisfaction. As usual I tried to discover rather how much they *thought* than how much they *knew*, and I was gratified.

With the girls I had St. John iv. to catechize upon, and only *here* could I have asked, 'How far off was the well our Lord sat upon?' and got the answer, 'Half an hour off.' It seemed so delightful; and to ask whether they carried their pitchers down to the same well. I dwelt on the interest our Lord took especially in women, the sinful and the suffering, and how they ministered to Him in His journeys, and by the cross, and were rewarded with the earliest sight of the risen Lord, so I could plead with them, whether Greeks, or Moslems, or Anglicans, to love the Lord Jesus as those women did, and win the message Mary Magdalene got from his lips, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father.' I was so glad that these thoughts were given me for them. With the boys I had Jacob's wrestling with the angel, as expounded in Hosea xi. Mr. Fallscheer, the missionary, was with me part of the time; then Salim, the chief muallim [teacher] of the mission, (p. 284) took me to call at the Samaritan high priest's, rather a young, thoughtful and dignified man; by his side was an aged but inferior priest, a Levite perhaps.

I tried to plead for the use of the Psalms of David, as well as the Toret or Pentateuch, and as much as I could for the work and kingdom of Christ; but all this was parried. I begged him at least to plead daily for a fuller and fuller enlightenment from God's Holy Spirit, with which he seemed more in sympathy.

He took me then to a school where Samaritan boys were reading out of the Law in Arabic in some Bible Society copies given by Mr. F. ; and, last of all, to his little synagogue, very plain and unfurnished except for being strown with Persian carpets. He gladly took some help for his poor and sick, which they refused to do in Bagdad. He showed me an extremely ancient copy of the Law in the usual circular case of silver and brass with the capital words of the inscription in gold. He asked me very curiously whether I had baptized any Jews in India, and I told him of Benjamin at Agra, the young rabbi, the first I baptized there. It seemed to amuse him that we had occupied an island fronting Beyrout, Jaffa, Haiffa, and Alexandria, and he asked whether we could not add Jerusalem also, to which I said we were not capable of ruling the world! He asked, as so many do, whether there were not any Russian invasions on our frontier. . . . The Fallscheers were a little vexed, I think, I could not stay with them, but I so prefer living in the khans among the people as heretofore, in spite of having to sleep on the stone floor, softened however by your rizais [quilts]. The rainy season has begun, and one has to keep as dry and warm as possible to escape fever. . . . The F.'s have a very small, unpretending little house, which I admire them for. . . . My fare has been rather meagre since my new dragoman has been with me, as I have to cook instead of him, even a dish of oatmeal, and he seldom seems to find anything eatable in the bazaars. I hope in Jaffa to be rejoined by my old servant. The streets of Nablous are unique almost, through the long heavily vaulted archways which compose some of them, with no light except at each end. Cabbages and turnips with other European garden products abound in the well-watered gardens east of the city. At

the Bible Society's depot portions of Holy Scripture are bought more readily than heretofore by the Mohammedans, but more of the Law and Psalms than the Gospel. . . .

I have managed to visit two deeply interesting spots this evening: one the well at which our Lord sat when weary with the journey and discoursed with the Samaritan woman. Sychar, now called Askar, is a small village ten minutes distant on a low slope of hill. I read on the spot most of the chapter, and much enjoyed it. The other was Joseph's tomb, about which there seems to be reasonable doubt that it is genuine. It is surrounded with a strong wall built by a recent consul of Damacus.

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To MRS. FRENCH. Salt, Jan. 7.

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Shechem, Jan. 12.

Mr. Jamal is something like Bishop Dupanloup, I should say, in his excellence in catechizing, a real lamp burning and shining in the midst of the wild Bedawin of the lower ranges of the Moab hills. He is a little Elisha up there, minus the she-bears, though his rough hairy dress almost calls Elijah's mantle to mind. I told him I should always connect two names with Salt, one Micaiah's, the other Jamal's, which made him smile pleasantly, of course.

. . . On the way I had to sleep on a very dank wet field, as no hut even was available: for forty miles only two dwellings were in sight, one the ferryman's over the Jordan, and the other a Turkish barrack, whose inmates refused to give me a night's lodging. I brought away lumbago of course, and should have brought worse but that the muleteers spread on the rain-sodden ground a sackcloth bag with chopped straw in it, and your Indian rizais did the rest for me. . . .

It is the week of prayer-meetings, and I am to give an address this evening and celebrate to-morrow. I partly rest here six days because of the quiet of it, and partly because I have an excellent Arabic teacher here, and I always get a fresh push on in my studies with such a man.

Jan. 14. I miss my old dragoman much, and have in vain tried to find another. Two I tried have both proved failures, and in my state of head it is very unsafe being answerable for everything. The cold and damp is trying, and Shechem in its hollow between the mount of cursing and blessing especially so.

. . . The Samaritan high priest called yesterday and sat an hour or more. We had a long chat in Arabic over the prophecies of the Old Testament. His father was very near becoming a Christian, and Mr. F. thinks quite died in the faith of Christ. There are only about 200 Samaritans left altogether. I told the priest the great want in these parts was a real John the Baptist to be raised up in them, like him whose head is said to be preserved in a small chapel on Mount Ebal, and his body at Sebastiyeh, and that I wished that prophet might be the priest himself, witnessing to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. At this he looked rather taken aback and astonished.

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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

The year was 1889