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To the East by Way of the West:

Giving an account of what the author saw in heathen lands during his late missionary voyage around the world; also graphic descriptions of travel and sight-seeing in Turkey, Greece, Rome, Italy, France, Switzerland, Germany and England.

By the Late

Bishop E. M. Marvin,

with Biographical Sermon, by Bishop **H. N. McTyeire, D.D.,**

And introduction, by Rev. **T.O. Summers, D.D.**

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(p. 395) smaller, on the mountain sides. But here in the territory of the tribe of Ephraim, the son of the beloved Joseph, who had one portion given him above his brethren, the "fair valleys" begin to appear.

Returning toward the main road by a rather precipitous way, we came to a fine large oak near a spring, where, of course, we would lunch. This we did, in company with some very pleasant English gentlemen.

On starting again, we fell in with, and passed, a small train of mules, two of which were loaded with native ladies. A singular double-saddle was suspended across the mule, so that one lady sat on each side of the mule, being covered in on all sides by a curtained frame. Each of these mules was led by a man.

In a short while we ascended a ridge of considerable elevation, when lo! a sea of verdure lay before us. It was the "plain of Samaria," all waving with fine crops of wheat, just in full head, or just plowed for later planting of vegetables and sesame. We have seen nothing that can approach to this since we left the plain of Sharon, and indeed the wheat is better here than there—decidedly so. This plain lies between bold mountains, being probably as much as fifteen miles long, north and south, by six or eight wide. These dimensions I give as they struck my own eye. As we descended toward the valley we had nearly the full length of it in view, and toward its northern extremity, on the left side, was the bold, precipitous swell of Mount Gerizim.

Our way lay for some distance through the center of this valley, but as we neared Mount Gerizim it (p. 396) inclined toward the base of the mountain. Soon we saw a narrow valley running up on the north side of Gerizim, due west, at right angles with the valley of Samaria, through which we had come. This very narrow valley lies between Gerizim and another mountain equally lofty and precipitous on the north side of it. I need scarcely say that this is Mount Ebal. Before we turned to the left into this small valley, our attention was called to a point near the mouth of it, but properly in the larger plain. It was Jacob's well, in the parcel of ground which he gave to his son Joseph. On riding to it we found it in a state of utter neglect. The earth at the top is much fallen in, and a stone lay on the opening of it where it enters the rock. We had all promised ourselves a drink out of it, and one of the party had a bottle, in which he was going to carry some of it home. But alas! it was dry. I imagine it is filled up a good deal with rubbish. The winter rains sometimes fill it, but now, even so early in the season as the middle of April, it is empty.

Half a mile to the north-west is Joseph's tomb. Some eminent archaeologists are disposed to accept this tomb as being genuine—not, of course, as the old building, but one occupying the same spot. It is a very plain structure, consisting of four walls, without a roof, and an oval tomb inside standing diagonally with the line of the walls. The whole structure was much dilapidated, until within a few years past an English gentleman had it put in repair at his private expense.

From Joseph's tomb, we turned up the valley already mentioned as separating Ebal from Gerizim, (p. 397) and riding about two miles came to the city of Nablous, which occupies the place of the old Shechem. The modern city was built by Vespasian, who gave it the Greek name Neapolis, which in the native speech has been corrupted into Nablous, as the same name in Italy has been shortened into Naples. The old Shechem, it is supposed, stood to the eastward of the present city about one mile.

A stream of living water, fed by numerous springs, runs through this little valley, so that the water-supply is abundant and accessible. The valley at the narrowest part I take to be about half a mile wide. Farther in it is considerably wider. It is covered with wheat, in full head now, most of which is very heavy. From the edges of the valley the mountains rise to their full height of over two thousand feet so precipitously as to render the ascent impracticable, or nearly so, except by a circuitous way, though some of our party ventured to *descend* at the steepest point of Mount Gerizim, after having gone up by the easier path.

Our camp had been pitched on the west side of the city, and in approaching it we passed through the principal street, which is paved with square blocks of limestone of different dimensions and somewhat irregular surface. These stones are worn so smooth by the human feet that have been coming and going over them for centuries, that I looked every moment for my horse to slip and fall, but the whole party passed through in safety. Nothing worse befell us than the shouting of Mussulman boys in our rear, "Nassara! Nassara!" How the little infidels would have enjoyed it if one of our horses (p. 398) had come down and brought his rider sprawling upon the ground!

It was Saturday evening, and we remained in camp here over Sunday. I have uniformly abstained from sight-seeing on the Lord's day, but in this instance I felt that it would be in keeping with the spirit of the day to ascend Mount Gerizim. Accordingly, our little party started out with a guide, going first to the Samaritan synagogue, where we met the high-priest. This building is quite removed from the principal thoroughfare, being situated on the foot of the sacred mountain, the approaches being by "ways that are dark," the streets being very narrow, and some of them arched over for considerable distances. The synagogue itself, when we reached it, we found to be a small building, very plain, with uninviting surroundings. There is a small, open, paved court in front of it, closely surrounded with other buildings, in the center of which in an unpaved area of four or five feet square, are three small orange trees. The synagogue itself is small, the floor being covered with carpeting, except a narrow strip, a foot lower than the rest, just inside of the door. The general plan of the interior is nearly square, with a recess to the left at the farther end.

We found the high-priest a polite man, and rather fine-looking. He would have admitted us freely into his little sanctuary, if we would have "taken our shoes from off our feet," which we did not choose to do. But we stood on the strip of naked stone, just inside, while the priest brought us "the Book of the Law," an old parchment, rolled up after the primitive (p. 399) manner, and kept in a cylindrical metallic case, which opened on one side, having hinges on the other. The case itself was covered with a cloth of wrought silk. This book is, as I understand it, in the Samaritan text. We told him we understood that he was in possession of a very ancient copy of the Law, and asked him if this was it. He answered frankly, no, and assured us that the oldest copy was rarely exhibited to any one. But after a brief pause he

added, as I was a bishop, he would show it to me. How did he know I was a bishop? That is more than I can tell. Then, again, was it genuine respect for the Episcopal office? or was it *buncombe* for *backsheesh*? I cannot tell; but one thing I do know, that is, that *backsheesh* was expected and *paid*. But my eyes were greeted with the sight of that *old, old* copy of the Pentateuch. It was kept in a case like the other, only this case was covered with *two* elegant pieces of cloth, one above the other, and was itself covered with raised figures, on one side; one being a model of the front view of the old Temple on Gerizim. Beside this, there was Moses's rod, Aaron's rod, the altar of sacrifice, and several other of the sacred objects contained in the Temple. The coverings were removed, the case opened, and a portion of the old parchment spread before us. They claim for it a fabulous antiquity, and some good linguists who have seen it believe it to be properly referred to a date about coeval with the Christian era.

I have devoted so much time to this topic on account of the singular character of this people. Here is a little knot of people that have continued together at the foot of Mount Gerizim through all (p. 400) changes, maintaining the worship of the ancient Samaritan to this day, and preserving with the most scrupulous care their copies of the Book of the Law. For many ages their number has been small, and now the census shows but forty or fifty families. Yet this handful of men cling persistently to their traditions, lingering in the shadow of "this mountain" in which "men ought to worship," with a tenacious and enthusiastic attachment that the ages have not been able to wear out. Every year, at the time of the vernal new moon, they camp out on the lofty summit of the sacred mountain for a full week, and kill the Passover, eating only unleavened bread, and worshipping the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.

We were told that the synagogue-worship would take place at the *eleventh hour*—five o'clock P. M.— and that our attendance would not be regarded as an intrusion. It was an opportunity that we could not afford to let slip.

Meanwhile we repaired to the little Baptist Mission, where the pastor, the Rev. Mr. El Kari, a native of Palestine, but educated in England, was in the midst of his sermon. The hearers were all seated on the floor, their shoes having been left at the door. When we were discovered, they politely drew to one side and the other, opening the way for us to pass through to a settee near the preacher's stand—for pulpit he had not. The greater number of auditors were the children of the Sunday-school, but the few adult persons present were remarkably fine-looking. The pastor himself had as fine a head and face as you will see in a month's travel. The coramuni- (p. 401) cants are only nine, but the Sabbath-school is well attended, and the Mission is a handful of leaven in the meal.

After the service we had some pleasant chat with the pastor and his intelligent Liverpool wife, and saw their three beautiful children, after which we made our way toilsomly up, up, to the summit of Mount Gerizim. On the very top we found wheat fields.

There are some very massive ruins here, and some are from early times—none, however, earlier than Justinian. But a rock is shown on which it is said the altar stood. I doubt, however, if this is worthy of credence.

But we had a grand view of the great valley of Samaria, through which we had passed the day before, and of the valley and city of Nablous, with the "rock-ribbed mountains" on all sides. The green and fresh-plowed fields alternating in the valley presented a scene of exquisite beauty. Only forests were wanting to make the landscape as lovely as it was magnificent. To my eye no landscape can be perfect without them, and they are nowhere found in Palestine. There are, to be sure, in some places, olive groves that almost amount to forests; yet they are too limited and artificial-looking. Here and there, also, fig-orchards

relieve the nakedness of the mountain-sides with a fresh and delightful verdure; but they are only *orchards*. The free forests that nature makes are not here.

The time had now come for the accomplishment of a purpose long since formed by H. and myself—the reading of the blessings and curses, responsively, (p. 402) on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, with a view to ascertain if the space between might be compassed with the human voice. We had detected the very spot where this *must* have taken place, at first sight. There is no mistaking it. There is a natural rock-pulpit on each of the mountains at the point of nearest approach to each other—the one just opposite to the other. At this point the level ground is, to my eye—for we made no measurements—about half a mile wide, and from the edge of the level ground to the rocks from which the responsive utterances must have been delivered, the ascent was perhaps a quarter of a mile on each side, putting the two at a distance of a mile, or near it, on a straight line.

In both directions from this point the valley widens, so that a countless host might be assembled in it and on the foot of the respective mountains. The man who sees the place once can never doubt as to the question of *room* for the people to stand, even upon the supposition that there were three millions of them actually present.

Mr. Hendrix took his stand on Mount Gerizim, and Mr. Samson on Mount Ebal. I and our guide stood in the valley between, when the reading commenced. Every word, every syllable, every vowel, every consonant, pronounced by the two men reached my ear distinctly, except a sentence or two lost in the noise of some passing travelers on the road—and that notwithstanding a current of wind *against* the voice of Mr. Samson who was the more remote of the two from my position. More than that, Mr. Samson heard every word from the other (p. 403) side, and Mr. Hendrix heard nearly every word from Mr. Samson, though the wind was adverse.

The narrative of the responsive reading of the blessings and curses here has been criticised as impracticable, but the *fact* demonstrates that it is not so. Whether it is the dense atmosphere of the narrow valley, or whether the rock walls of the mountains act as a sounding-board, I do not know; but I do *know* that the articulate utterances of the human voice reach out over this great space with astonishing distinctness. Before the reading began I conversed with both men as to the right position for them to occupy. *

What a scene was that when all the congregation of the tribes was assembled here in this valley, "with the women and the little ones," and the officers and elders and judges stood some on this side and some on that, these shouting out the blessings in unison, and those the curses, all the people—three millions—shouting back with one voice, AMEN! See Deut, xxvii., xxviii., and Josh. viii. 30, 35.

After lunch Mr. Hendrix and Mr. Samson made the ascent of Mount Ebal to the top, while I rested in the tent, reading the word of God, meditating thereon. At the eleventh hour, promptly, we were at the Samaritan synagogue again. The worshipers were "all men. They left their shoes in the court before the door. But few wore stockings, and all who did, but one or two, took them off. Most of them washed their feet before entering, for which purpose jars of water had been provided. Lamps were lighted within. We were told that chairs would be set for us inside if we chose to remove (p. 404) our shoes, otherwise we should be placed conveniently before the door where we could witness even' thing. We preferred the latter, as the weather was cool, and we were apprehensive of taking cold, not being accustomed to sit without shoes.

The service began twenty minutes after the time—a circumstance not unlike what I have known in Methodist Churches at home. It was unique, and not unimpressive. The high-priest stood in the recess, and when he intimated that the services had begun, all stood in perfect silence for five minutes, and then he recited a sentence, to which the congregation responded,

and then all in unison kept up a sort of recitative service, broken at intervals by bowing until their heads touched the floor, always in the direction of the place where the Temple stood on Mount Gerizim.

Then some one would repeat a sentence or two, when all would rise, and standing upright, commence again the same sort of recitative exercise as before. Several kept their voices at a high key, others kept to a low tone. They were evidently all using the same words, but not repeating sentences over and over. Some of the boys had books, but all the older men rehearsed without any such aid. Nearly all impressed me as being very much in earnest. One elderly man, however, came out and chatted with us a little, two or three times, dropping his worship meanwhile. He had visited England, could speak English a little, and seemed greatly disposed to be social. We discovered at last, though, that he had an eye to business, as he desired us to go to his shop and buy some of the prayer-books, which we would probably have done if it had (p. 405) not been on the Lord's-day. My conviction is that *backsheesh* is at the bottom of all the politeness shown to a man in this country.

The service continued for about forty minutes. Just at the close the high-priest held up the Book of the Law, which is much venerated by them. I understand they sometimes go forward and kiss it, but in this case they did not do so.

I do not know on what principle the priesthood is maintained among them, whether by hereditary right or by selection, nor do I know what the priest's duties are in detail, but he is supported by the old Jewish method of the tithe.

There were no women in the congregation—only men, but they impressed us as being intelligent, looking above the average of the people of this country. Their perpetuation is a phenomenon, on a smaller scale, as marvelous as the preservation of the Jews. The wonder is, that, since they exist at all, after so long a time, there should be so few of them, especially as they are perpetuated by natural increase.

(p. 406) CHAPTER XXX.

FROM NABLOUS TO TIBERIAS.

I BELIEVE I omitted to state in the last chapter that the population of Nablous is estimated at about 13,000, and that it has a general air of prosperity above the average, perhaps, of Palestine towns. We broke up our camp there on Monday morning, April 16, and made our way northwest to the old city of *Samaria*, about three hours distant.

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

Bishop E. M. Marvin is **MARVIN, ENOCH MATHER** (1823–1877). Enoch Mather Marvin, Methodist bishop and author, the son of Wells Ely Marvin, was born in a double log cabin in Warren County, Missouri, on June 12, 1823.

<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fma68>

The visit to Nablus was in the middle of April 14, 15, 1877

Mr. Hendrix is Rev. Eugene R. Hendrix of Missouri. Mr. Samson, was a young gentleman from Virginia.