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(Page 356c) **Pharmacy in Palestine***

I send you herewith some additional specimens from Beyrout and Neapolis- a specimen of beeswax and two of soap. One bears the trade-mark of a manufacturer in Neapolis, the ancient Sychar or Shechem of Jacob's time. The soap industry is one of great importance in Neapolis, and there are six large factories there. The process is, I believe, the same as that described in my letter to the *Chemist and Druggist* from Beyrout. I visited one of them on the main road to Baalbek. The doors and windows were wide open, and, on looking in, I was bidden to enter by the workmen. There was no sign of any boss or foreman, though the proprietor may have been one of the half dozen busy men ladling lye from the stone troughs at the bottom of the percolators to the top of the mixture of ashes and soda. They addressed some instructive remarks to me, which I took to signify that the soap was of excellent quality, which I would do well to invest in largely, and that they would highly appreciate something in the way of backshish, or, failing that, a few of the oranges which I was carrying to our camp for dessert. I held the bag open, and from their expressions of satisfaction was convinced I had guessed right. I found the soap first rate, both for washing and shaving, but have not had any opportunity of testing it for laundry use. Near Neapolis there are enormous piles of ashes, the accumulation of centuries. The whole country abounds with olive trees, and therefore, the oil is very plentiful. The greater part of the soap used in Palestine and Syria is manufactured at Neaplois. The remnant of the Samaritans now live in Neapolis and its vicinity; only about 600 of them remain. Families have been engaged in the manufacture of soap for centuries.

There are at Neapolis two very ancient copies of the Samaritan Bible which were written before the time of Solomon. We happened to arrive there on Saturday, and therefore were enabled to attend their services and to see these copies of the Old Testament. The Scripture parchment is rolled on two round sticks covered with carved silver. The scroll is very highly ornamented with embroidered silk at the back. In reading one has to unroll one end of the scroll and roll up the other. All of the streets of Neapolis are very narrow, and some of them covered by dark archways, which support the houses built overhead. Passing along the main market street, which is about 15 feet wide, I asked my friend, Mr. Karey, the Baptist missionary, if there was any pharmacy in town, when he pointed before us, on the right hand overhead to a balcony in which the pharmacist was seated. He recognized Mr. Carey and invited us up. We entered from the street, along a narrow passage about 50 feet to the rear of the building, and ascended the stone stairway to the first floor. Here was an antechamber where all visitors and customers are expected to remove their shoes or boots just the same as if they were entering a private house. The streets in some of the Mahometan towns are anything but clean; but people are very particular to avoid bringing dirt into the houses, and leave their shoes in the anteroom and walk

* Letter from S.M. Burroughs to the *Chemist and Druggist*

about in their stockings or with slippers. The pharmacy proper adjoined this room, and was stocked with rows of doctors' bottles, some of them of curious design, and all bearing Arabic labels. Quinine is a staple article of medicine. Among other drugs, I recognized rhubarb, bicarbonate of soda, magnesia, ipecac, chloride of ammonium, antipyrin, bismuth, calomel, morphia, opium, and bicarbonate, chlorate and bromide of potassium. The pharmacist was clad in a long robe of silk, with narrow stripes of yellow and purple and fastened at the waist with a silk sash. Over this was a loosed outer garment of black cloth. On his head was a large turban. His son, who assist him in the business, wore a fez without a turban. We were very cordially received both by the pharmacist and his son. The dignified gentleman represented on the diploma of the Pharmaceutical Society, with long (p. 357) robe and hair and apparently taking things very easy, would make a very good Arab apothecary if he had his robe lengthened and his hair cut short and covered with a fez and turban, substituting his ventilated slippers with a pair of red sandals and the scales with a string of beads. A cup of coffee should be handy by on top of the pedestal, and he should have a cigarette in his mouth of in the other hand. Our friends were unaccustomed to see members of the craft from outside parts of the world. They volunteered to give every information desired, as they observed that I was much interested in seeing their pharmacy. The dispensing is done on a table in the center of the room next to the anteroom, where are chairs and sofas, and where customers can wait for their medicines. The favorite seat of the elder pharmacist was in the balcony window, where he could recline and look up and down the street while casting up his accounts or pursuing his studies or counting his beads—because during the month of Ramadan it is customary for all Mahometans to carry beads and with each one repeat a prayer to Allah, declaring at the same time that Mahomet is the greatest of all prophets.

The situation of Neapolis is very beautiful, being in a fertile valley on the side of Mount Gerizim. Mount Nebal is direct opposite. They are two of the largest mountains in Palestine. The sides which face the valley are hollowed out like an amphitheater, and here the tribes used to gather in tens of thousands and chant the blessings and cursing of Jehovah upon the righteous and unrighteous of the land. There were luxuriant fields of half-grown wheat in the valley in March and groves of leafy olive, pomegranate, and fig trees on the hillsides. On the summit of Mount Gerizim are extensive ruins of the ancient temple of the Samaritans. On our arrival and departure we were besieged with demands for backshish from troops of children and beggars, among whom were several lepers in various stages of decay. They were a sad spectacle—some with parts of the hands and faces missing or disfigured—so we were glad to give them some piastres to make their lives less miserable with. The Government, either from indifference or Mahometan belief in fatality, takes no precaution to keep the lepers from the public streets.

Comments on this section from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

The author of this article is **Silas Mainville Burroughs, Jr.** (1846–1895) He was partner of Burroughs, Wellcome & Co, a British drug industry.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silas_Mainville_Burroughs,_Jr.

Brother El Karey was **Youhannah El Karey**, a son of a native of Nablus, who was a member of the Greek Church in Nablus. Kary met Rev. John Mills and attended the Baptist College, Pontypool and Regent's Park. He married Alice Maude Mary Roper, daughter of Moses Roper in Wales. He is mentioned in *That Goodly Mountain and Lebanon: Being the narrative of a ride through the countries of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee into Syria, in the month of August, 1872* by **Thomas Jenner**, and *The Ride Through Palestine* by **Rev. John W. Dulles, 1881**