

Among the Holy Hills
By **Henry M. Field, D. D.**
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(p. 88) CHAPTER VIII.
NABLUS A DAY THAT WAS NOT ALL SUNSHINE
A TALE OF ROBBERY AND OF TURKISH JUSTICE.

In "wandering through the wilderness of this world," I have had varied experiences—days that were bright and days that were dark, and days that were both bright and dark, cloud and sunshine following each other in quick succession. But not many days have I had anywhere the experience of which was so far from previous expectation, as that we spent in the ancient city of Nablous. As we entered the valley, there was something in the very atmosphere which revived us. We were greeted with the sound of running streams (there are said to be seventy springs issuing from the hills), which rush joyously through the valley. We were entering a city of Samaria whose history goes back to the time of the Captivity, when the Ten Tribes were carried away to Assyria, and earlier still, to the days when Jacob fed his flocks on the adjacent plain. We had come up from Jacob's Well, the place where our Lord had been, and passed between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, from which it seemed as if alternate blessing and cursing rolled over our heads. And now we were camped at the foot of Gerizim, the mount of blessing, the very clouds of which ought to rain perpetual benediction.

(p. 89) NABLUS

As we approached our camping ground, Floyd recognized an old acquaintance in the person of an English missionary, Mr. El Karey, long resident in Nablous, who followed us to our tents, and after a kindly welcome, offered to conduct us through the town, that is worth seeing, as it is next to Jerusalem in population, which it far surpasses in commercial activity. Nablous is one of the few places in the East that have been touched with the business life of the modern world. It seemed as if the rushing streams had communicated to the people a little of their own rapid movement. At least they have set the wheels of industry in motion. Besides the oil presses which receive the abundant yield of the olive orchards that we have seen all along our course, and turn it into oil, there are some twenty factories engaged in turning the oil into soap, which has become a large article of export to Jaffa and Beirut, and thence to all the ports of the Mediterranean. It was really refreshing, after passing through so many places that were more dead than alive, to come to one town that showed a sign of life in this sleepy old country.

But the chief interest of Nablous to a traveller is that it introduces him to the Samaritans. It is the only place in Palestine where there is a remnant of this ancient sect. In the town of Samaria itself there are no Samaritans; all are at Nablous, and here they are very few, and fast fading away. A hundred and fifty souls is the whole remnant of the Samaritan people, counting men, women, and children! Their fewness and feebleness are indicated by the

pettiness of their synagogue—a small room, with bare whitewashed walls; and yet it contains a manuscript of the Pentateuch (their Bible is limited to the Five Books of Moses) which they affirm is the oldest in the world, and regard as a priceless treasure. They claim that it was written by a great-grandson of Aaron; certainly it is yellow enough to
(p. 90) THE SAMARITANS.

have come out of the Ark. They are such a "feeble folk," so few and so poor, that the high priest (a descendant of the tribe of Levi) ekes out a living by showing travellers the synagogue and the sacred scroll, and even offered to sell us his photograph! And yet such is the pride of an ancient race, that this handful of Samaritans still cling to the belief that they, and they only, are the true people of God. Three times a year they go up on Mount Gerizim, and keep the festivals prescribed by the law of Moses, while they celebrate the Passover by sacrifices—the only people professing to worship Jehovah, who continue that ancient rite. Mount Gerizim is the only place in the world where still ascends the smoke of sacrifice. The Passover is kept with the strictest observance of every detail enjoined by Moses, with the hurried repast of bitter herbs and unleavened bread, while they eat the Paschal lamb with girdles about their loins, and staff in hand, as if preparing for instant flight. What is left is burned with fire, in imitation of the ancient Israelites, who left only ashes behind them, as they turned their backs on Egypt, and took up their march through the desert. The continued existence of such a fragment of people is an extraordinary spectacle, and is a subject for study. I hardly know anywhere of an instance of such tenacity of belief. Here is a sect which was in existence in the time of Christ, and probably hundreds of years before: for it is supposed to date from the time of Nehemiah, when, not being permitted to share in the rebuilding of the Temple, they separated themselves from the Jews; which has lived through all the storms and persecutions of more than two thousand years; and which, it may be, will not die till it dies with the race. If there comes a time when there is a "last man," it would be in keeping with the spirit of his race if he were to go up on Mount Gerizim, and there build an (p. 91) altar unto the Lord, and kindling a sacrifice, lie down to die, that the flame of sacrifice and the flame of life might expire together.

After our excursion, Mr. El Karey returned with us to camp, and we kept him to dinner. With true American inquisitiveness, I plied him with all sorts of questions about the country and the people.....

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

Henry M. Field is **Henry Martyn Field** (1822 - 1907) was an American author and clergyman. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Martyn_Field_%28minister%29

Field's visit was in April, 1881. He traveled with Englishman Mr. Winter & wife and an American Mr. Rolla Floyd. Also a Mr. Weedon, Another American Rev. Dr. Adams & wife of Fall River, Mass.