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Hal's Travels
In Europe, Egypt, and the Holy Land;
A Twelve Months' Tour
During Which He Saw many Wonderful Things and a Vast Deal of Fun.
By **Alexander R. Wiggs**
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J.B. M'Ferrin
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(p. 318) Leaving Shiloh, we soon enter a rich and most beautiful valley. The country has been improving ever since we entered the domains of Ephraim, and there now seems but little room for further improvement. Such fertile districts are unknown in Judah or Benjamin. Every step we advance proves to us that Ephraim was indeed blessed with the "chief things of the ancient mountains." The first high hill we ascend after leaving this valley reveals a most glorious view. Away over yonder we see on a very high point a little white building of some kind. That is the landmark of Mount Gerizim, and marks the spot where the Samaritan Temple once stood. (p. 319) Beyond it we see the point of Mount Ebal. Between the two lies the valley and city of Shechem, or Sychar. And far, far away on the northern horizon we discern a peaked cone tipped with snow; that is Hermon!

Two or three hours' riding brings us to Jacob's Well, just at the entrance of the valley of Shechem, and near the base of Gerizim. Here the Saviour rested at noonday, wearied no doubt with the long walk up the hot plain, having come, like ourselves, from Jerusalem. There is but little to be seen at this well, for it is almost filled up, but we stop and read the story of that strange interview between our Lord and the Samaritan woman. The little white enclosure we see near by is Joseph's tomb. His body was brought up from Egypt, and buried in this place. Half an hour's ride up the valley brings us to Shechem, situated among the finest scenery in Palestine, and one of the most beautiful sites for a city from Dan to Beersheba. It is in a narrow valley, with the steep mountains of Ebal and Gerizim towering up on either side. Shechem has a population of about eight or ten thousand, the most villainous set of people we have seen since leaving Hebron. They take pride in hating Christians, and we must be particular not to offend them, or we may get up an unpleasant affair. We go into the synagogue of the Samaritans, (there are still a few here,) and are shown a manuscript copy of the law, which the high-priest tells us is three thousand five hundred years old.

(p. 320) It was in Shechem that Abraham first pitched his tent in Canaan; Jacob also settled here, and perhaps lived near where he dug his well. He bought that "parcel of a field" where his well is from Hamor, Shechem's father, and there was buried his favorite son Joseph. After removing from Shechem down to Hebron, Jacob still retained his plantation here, and it was to his fields here that he sent Joseph in quest of his brethren, to see if "it was well with them and

well with their flocks." They had removed to Dothan, twelve miles farther. The little fellow in his "coat of many colors" followed them up with the message of his good old father, and they sold him to the Ishmaelites.

As this was the place where the patriarchs first settled in Canaan, so it was, many hundred years later, the place where their descendants gathered after coming up out of Egypt, and here, on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, the blessing and cursing took place that we read about in Deuteronomy, xxvii. and xxviii. In different parts of the Scriptures we find that many highly interesting and important events occurred here in old times, but we will read them at our leisure, when we have more time. Those villainous Shechemites who eyer us so closely would perhaps rather see us move on.

The next place of importance at which we halt is Samaria, once a great and royal city, but now only a village. Within the walls of an old ruined church is said to be the tomb of John the Baptist. From the commanding position, and the numerous evi- (p. 321) dences of fine architecture, Samaria must have been a most beautiful city. None of the ancient buildings are standing, but the great hewn stones and the multitude of columns show that it was superior, in beauty at least, to any thing we have before seen in Palestine. There are hundreds of columns still standing, and hundreds more lying prostrate, scattered over a vast extent of ground. In one place, on a beautiful terrace along the hill-side, stands a row of columns near three-quarters of a mile in length. There was once a double row of them fifty feet apart, but nearly all of one of the rows have been thrown down, and have rolled down the hill. In many other places columns are standing in rows and squares. Vineyards and olive-groves now cover the grounds, and magnificent specimens of carved stones lie scattered about among them, from the top of the hill even down into the valley. The origin of this city is told with simplicity and clearness, in 1 Kings xvi. 23, 24. Its destruction was foretold by Micah; and, as we stand on the hill and look on these columns shooting up from clustering vines and green wheat, and the great heaps among the olive trees in the valley below, we read with thrilling interest the striking and fearful prediction of that prophet, "I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof." This prophecy is fulfilled to the very letter. The cause of this destruction we learn from Hosea (p. 322) xiii. 16: "Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God."

Leaving Samaria, we traverse a most picturesque and highly cultivated section of country. A ride of six miles brings us to one of the richest and most beautiful little plains we have seen. It is Dothan. Here is where Joseph found his brethren with their flocks the day they sold him. Elisha the prophet once lived here.

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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