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GEORGE Q. CANNON,
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

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Correspondence.

SYRIA, March 23, 1873.

Editor Deseret News:

Leaving Jerusalem, we ascend by a steep, rocky, winding path to the commanding heights of Mount Scopus, where, turning backward, we take a long, lingering look at the "Holy City"—its noble domes, its high, tapering minarets, and its surrounding mountains. We descend the mountain into a naked, desolate region, our path lying over rocky plateaus, through deep ravines, over barren hills covered with loose stones and sharp rocks. A small village is seen away to our left on a lofty hill, flags and streamers flying, guns firing, and groups of men and women gaily attired, in open air, rejoicing in the dance. We pass several towns perched among the gray rocks, on the mountain slopes, or crowning the summit of high hills, also several sites of ancient towns overspread with ruins. Sterility and barrenness form the general features of the country. The trees are few, gnarled and stunted, here and there sticking out from rents and holes in the rocks, and broken, decayed, terraces, and still clinging to the cliffs.

The second day we found the hills and glens less rugged, the country improving in general appearance, the soil more fertile and better cultivated. We passed through many winding valleys with landscape beautiful and picturesque—the hills terraced from base to summit, supporting vines, figs and olive trees, the scenery enlivened by wild flowers, bright and gay, springing up from the green, luxuriant herbage. The Arab is seen with his primitive plow, and diminutive oxen, breaking up his ground; a Bedouin on his fleet steed, with his brass-bound gun suspended over the shoulder, galloping over the hills; the Mussulman, with his wives and children, scantily dressed, plucking the weeds from his patch of grain; peasants passing in their gay dresses of red and green; long strings of mules, donkeys and camels, winding along the tortuous path; the shepherd preceding his flock of sheep and goats, leading them along the mountain slopes, or standing with them clustered around a favorite fountain.

We are now approaching Nablous, a modern town on the site of the ancient Shechem, a name familiar to the biblical reader. Clambering up a steep, rocky path, we arrive at the crest of a lofty ridge, where we enjoy a lovely, romantic scene—the finest and most pleasing since leaving Jerusalem. Before us lies an undulating plain, stretching far away northward, encircled by picturesque hills, no object on its surface to break the view; around its borders are small groves of orange trees, and here and there clumps and rows of olives, giving it the appearance of a European park. The villages, here as elsewhere, instead of being located on the plain, are, for security, built on the crests of steep hills, or high up on the acclivities.

The people we now meet appear different in character, manners and dress from those occupying the country we have passed. They look daring and ferocious, ready to commence hostilities on the slightest provocation. Armed cap-a-pie with a long flint-lock shot gun, a huge dagger sticking in the front of their girdle, pistols, and a large knobbed club, they seem pleased in displaying these arms, and, judging from their sturdy, athletic appearance, I have no doubt they could employ them to great advantage. We frequently met these fellows armed in this manner, driving along a miserable looking, half starved donkey, loaded probably with all he possessed, except his arms and shabby clothing. There is, however, a cause for this oddity. A blood feud, most likely, exists between his family and some other family, which commenced hundreds of years ago, by their

ancestors. Some person was killed, and one of that person's family killed another in return; then another was killed in revenge, and thus it has continued until the present. Every member of the family is in danger, and lives in dread—any moment, the avenger of blood may pounce upon him. Therefore he is armed at all hours, and in all places—when leading his flocks on the mountain, his donkey on the road, or when plowing in the field, oftentimes having to flee from house and home, and abide with strangers. This fearful state of things arises from the following law of the Koran, "O, true believers, the law of retaliation is ordained to you for the slain—the free shall die for the free." I suppose Mahomet drew this from the Old Testament, but failed to make the corresponding merciful arrangements—"cities of refuge."

The second night we camped in a lovely spot, in the suburbs of Nablous. This city, known in Bible history as Shechem, possesses the most charming and picturesque scenery of any site in Palestine. It is situated along the base of Mount Gerizim, on the south side of a verdant valley, sparkling with streams and fountains, and decorated with olive trees, gardens and fruit orchards. The cliffs, hills and mountain slopes, supporting terraces, rising one above another in regular gradation, growing narrow strips of waving grain, together with fig, olive and orange trees. The valley is clothed in the richest foliage and vegetation. Viewed from different points, the city, with its white domed buildings, and its mosques, and towering minarets, presents a charming picture. Nablous contains eight thousand inhabitants, only five hundred of whom are Christians. The buildings are constructed chiefly of stone; in style and general appearance are similar to those in Jerusalem. The streets, as in all other towns in Palestine, are narrow, crooked and extremely filthy. The houses project over and cover them, being supported on arches. The inhabitants have the reputation of mistreating strangers, especially ladies. Prompted by curiosity, no doubt, they visited our tents by multitudes. In turn, we perambulated their filthy city, experiencing no ill treatment. In Shechem, as we learn from sacred history, Simeon and Levi avenged the dishonor of their sister Dinah, by murdering the whole population of the city; having first deceived them into complete disability of defending themselves. It was the first spot where Abraham pitched his tent in Canaan—"place of Shechem at the oak of Moreh." Jacob also, on his return from Mesopotamia, pitched his tent in this then pastoral region. This is the place where Jacob sent his favorite son, Joseph, to look after his brethren. "A certain man found him wandering in the field" and directed him to Dothan, about twelve miles north, where they had removed. Here Rehoboth was proclaimed king over all Israel; and not long afterwards the ten tribes revolted, and made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king, and established Shechem as the capital.

Soap, cotton and oil are the chief productions at Nablous. The olive is extensively cultivated, and is seen around every village and hamlet. Clothed in mid winter, with their soft, gray foliage, they always impart beauty and add an air of cheerfulness to the landscape. The olive is slow in its growth, requiring from twelve to fifteen years before it begins to pay the expense of cultivation. It is long lived—one thousand years and upwards. The older ones have a remarkably venerable appearance, with their great gnarled and furrowed stems, especially when representing the last stages of life's decline. Usually the fruit ripens in November or December, and is beaten off with long sticks, and the use of ladders, and gathered by women and children, who carry it away in baskets on their heads to the press, where the oil is extracted by an apparatus quite rude and primitive. The berries are placed in a round cavity excavated in a rock, when a huge stone is rolled over them by oxen, or manual force. The pulp is bound up in mats, placed under the press, which is forced down by a screw or heavy beam. The liquor is partially heated, the oil is then skimmed, and put into skins, or earthen jars.

From Nablous (Shechem) to Samaria, our next principal point, we pass through a lovely country—over terraced hills, and winding through partially cultivated valleys, with fields of grain two thirds grown, and orchards of figs and apricots. Small villages are seen crowning summits of distant hills or perched high up their rocky sides, seldom appearing in the rich vales below.

Samaria contains about sixty buildings, with four hundred inhabitants. It occupies a narrow, rocky plateau, midway up the side of the steep, lofty hill. In the midst of a gentle shower, we rode up to the village through a narrow, winding path, clambering over large boulders, and forked, sloping, conical, shelving and slippery rocks. Halting a few minutes, we then ascended to the summit, on which is an open area, formerly surrounded by columns, only a few of which are now standing. In descending the mountain, we reached a place on its slope, covered with magnificent ruins—a quantity of columns, some standing, others broken, and lying in fragments over the ground. Sixty or more of these pillars, two feet in diameter, eighteen in height, are standing without their capitals, deeply sunk in the ground. It is supposed that these columns were designed to decorate the principal street of the ancient city. Large quantities of hewn stone are strewn round, over the plowed fields and the orchards in the valley below, and piled into the terraces which partially encircle the hill.

In viewing these immense ruins, I was reminded of the fearful prediction of Micah: "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." LORENZO SNOW.

SYRIA, March 25, 1873.

Editor Deseret News:

Leaving Samaria, we wind up a rocky acclivity and pass through an avenue of olive trees, to a smart looking village, located on a stony ridge. Our road now lies over low hills covered with dwarf oak and hawthorn, through rich valleys abounding in wheat fields, fig orchards and groves of venerable olive trees, with gnarled and furrowed trunks, clothed with gray foliage, and along over hills whose terraced sides are covered with vineyards. Several villages are seen dotting the hill sides or crowning their lofty summits. We passed through some low, winding ravines. These are the passes so often defended by the "ten thousands of Ephraim and thousands of Manasseh" against their northern invaders. In the midst of these hills, the famous Gideon, the hero of Manasseh, was nurtured and reared; through these passes he marched at the head of his little army against the Midianites, who were lying in multitudes in the valley of Jezreel.

We passed a large village surrounded by olive groves. Its inhabitants have a bad reputation. It is said that they will not miss an opportunity of plundering the solitary traveler when found in the neighboring glens. Friday, 7th, we camped at Jenin, interpreted "fountain of gardens." It contains three thousand inhabitants, chiefly Mahometans. The town is charmingly situated, commanding a view of the great "Plain of Esdraelon." The low hills behind are overspread by shrubbery, with here and there patches of olives. Around the town the landscape is clothed in rich verdure, variegated with flowers of brilliant colors; also fine gardens encircled by hedges of cactus of immense growth, and palm trees here and there raising their graceful heads. The plain of Esdraelon, the famous battle field of Palestine, stretches far away, from fifteen to twenty miles to the base of the mountains, below Nazareth, on one side enclosed by the hills of Galilee, on the other by the mountains of Samaria, the whole forming one vast, unbroken expanse of verdure. In all this plain, not a village nor hamlet appears, though they are seen dotting the slopes of the surrounding hills, or perched on their rocky summits. Long strings of Bedouin tents are here and there strung along its borders, and numerous flocks and herds are fattening on its luxuriant herbage.

Several fierce looking Arabs visited our tents in the evening, whose appearance failed to impress us favorably respecting their future intentions; our guards occasionally fired a gun during the night, indicating their presence and preparation for defense. The following morning we passed over the Plain of Esdraelon. We now have a view of Mount Tabor, dotted with oaks from base to summit, and Mount Hermon, panoplied in snow. After descending a steep, rocky ridge, we wind through a dreary glen, opening into the valley of Nazareth. We rode through the crooked, filthy and narrow streets of the city of Nazareth, and pitched our tents near its borders. The town is located in narrow ravines, and on the narrow, rocky declivities by which they are separated. A little valley opens out before it, about one mile long and one half mile in breadth, engirded by high, bleak hills. The valley is divided into small, plowed fields, in the centre of which are patches of gardens, enclosed by hedges of cactus.

The Franciscan Convent is the most prominent structure, then a Mosque with its white tapering minaret looms up from among the low buildings. The city contains four thousand inhabitants, the larger portion of whom are Christians. Nazareth is remarkable for being the home of the Savior's boyhood—the scenes of his private life. Many objects and places are shown, associated with the Virgin and the Savior—the "Holy Grotto," where the angel announced to Mary that she was favored of the Highest; the "Workshop of Joseph," in which Jesus worked; the "Table of Christ," &c.; but having little faith in their identity, I waive description.

We remained over Sunday, and next morning pursued our way, leading over some fine valleys under moderate cultivation. Arabs were plowing the fields. Their plows, and mode of using them, are remarkably simple and primitive. This instrument consists of a crooked stick, four inches in diameter, shod with iron six inches wide, tapered to a point, a wooden peg through the top forming the handle. In the middle of this stick, the end of a small round pole is fastened, the opposite end is attached to the yoke by strings or ropes. The yoke is formed by a short, straight pole, with bows, partly of wood and partly of ropes. It is placed upon the necks of two dwarfed, wretched oxen or cows, the size of our ordinary yearlings. In one hand, the Arab holds the handle of his plow, in the other flourishes a long stick, by virtue of which the machine is put in motion, and its velocity regulated. It works into the soil about four inches, breaking the same in breadth. The land, under this mode of cultivation will yield per acre, probably six or eight bushels. Under proper management it would produce five times the amount.

We stopped at an Arab village, known in Bible history as Cana of Galilee, consisting of a few low, dirty dwellings. We dismounted and entered a small, miserable structure, called a chapel, containing some old stone pots, which once, as we were informed, contained the water which Jesus converted into wine at the wedding. Withdrawing from this place of relics, I entered a hall some fifteen feet in length by thirteen in breadth, divested of floor and windows, occupied by Arab children as a schoolroom. Some thirty or forty boys, seated in rows upon the ground, each with a small tablet, covered with characters, were chanting

their lessons very loud, and with remarkable energy. This chanting and repeating together is the usual method adopted by the Arab teacher in instructing "the young idea how to shoot." It being maintained that it fixes more indelibly the principle in the memory. However this may be, I am certain the chanting scene was strikingly impressed on my memory, and the picturesque appearance and noisy characteristics of an Arab school cannot be forgotten.

At length we reach the summit of a lofty mountain and look abroad on the vale of Gennesaret, and down one thousand feet upon the Sea of Galilee, whose surging waves were once stilled, and the howling tempest silenced by the voice of the Savior. Descending the steep declivity, we spread our tents among some old ruins, rent walls, and crumbling towers, directly upon the shore. The effects of the great earthquake of '37 are everywhere distinctly visible.

The sea of Galilee is about fifteen miles long, from six to seven broad, though, owing to the remarkable clearness of the atmosphere, it looks much smaller. It occupies the bottom of a deep basin, the sides of which shelve down with gradual slopes from the summits of the surrounding hills. On one side these hills or mountains rise nearly two thousand feet, intersected by deep ravines. The Jordan flows into it from the East, and passes out at the South. It is about seven hundred feet above the level of the Dead Sea, into which the Jordan empties, after accomplishing a remarkably serpentine tour through the valley which bears its name.

We are tented in the suburbs of Tiberias, which is a small village of two thousand inhabitants. I numbers eight hundred Jews, poor, sickly looking and friendless, an appearance, unfortunately, too applicable to the generality of this people whom we saw in the towns and cities of Palestine. They are permitted to occupy a small area in the middle of the town, where they have erected small synagogues, and established some common schools.

Close upon the shore is a Latin convent, which stands on the spot, as we were informed, where the scene of the miraculous draught of fishes occurred. Tiberias was built by Herod, the murderer of John the Baptist, in honor of the Roman Emperor, and was the capital of the province of Galilee.

The next morning we moved camp up the lake six miles. President Smith, Prof. Carrington and T. W. Jennings, with two American gentlemen, taking boat and making the excursion by water; the remainder of the company, with myself, mounted horses and followed the shore. Our ride was interesting and cheering, under the influence of a smiling sun, and in an atmosphere of Egyptian balminess, far below the cold breezes of the hills of Galilee. We overtook some Bedouin ladies, each perched on the hump of a camel, traveling in the same direction, chanting their native songs very plaintively. Our young Arab guide, with becoming suavity, engaged them in an interesting conversation, the general features of which he afterwards explained. They informed him they had no husbands, which circumstance they reckoned a great misfortune. This was attributable, they said, to one cause only. The laws and customs of their country permitted the father to dispose of his daughter for any stipulated amount, the price varying from five hundred to eight thousand francs, according to the beauty and accomplishments of the lady in question; that they could readily procure husbands, but the young gentlemen who fancied them, and whom they wished to favor, were not prepared to meet the exorbitant demands of their fathers; consequently they were not married, which they regretted exceedingly. It was the custom of the ladies, they said, to marry early, at the ages of twelve or thirteen years; that they themselves were rising of twenty, a circumstance which made them uncomfortable and very melancholy.

We passed a cluster of low houses, resembling hovels more than human dwellings. This was formerly the residence of Mary Magdalene, whom the Savior delivered from the power of demons. Our path now lay along the gravelly shore of the sea, and through tangled thickets of thorns, cane and tall nettles, occasionally passing clumps of oleanders, adorned with blushing roses, peeping out beneath their green luxuriant foliage. At length we reached our camping ground, a romantic spot—a pretty patch of green sward, formed of clover and other grasses, near a remarkably large fountain, whose sparkling waters burst forth beneath a large grey mountain and swept down into the sea, some yards below. A camp of wild Bedouins, on our approach, comprehending our wishes, generously consented to withdraw to a distant locality. Before leaving, however, they proposed to honor us with a serenade. Their instruments were strikingly rude and as we presently learned, better adapted to loud, shrill noise than to musical harmony. Our animals were not excitable under ordinary circumstances, but this was a little too much for their nerves—looking towards the tempestuous sounds, they commenced snorting, prancing, breaking away, and rushing off in various directions. In this state of things, we saw, that, however flattering the serenade might be to our vanity, it was a drawback to our progress as tourists; hence we intimated to our Bedouin admirers that though we appreciated the honors they were laboring to bestow, should it suit their convenience to terminate at once the peculiar entertainment we should consider ourselves eminently favored. They closed the amusement with a modest suggestion that some "back-sheesh" was due for their services, which having paid, our muleteers hurried off in search of the animals. LORENZO SNOW.

The following extracts from a letter by President Geo. A. Smith to his family will be interesting to our readers:

ATHENS, April 11, 1873.

I was in Constantinople only four days—sight seeing is hard work when well followed. That is a great city, containing many objects of historic interest.

We left Constantinople on the 5th, arriving at Syria on the evening of the 8th, being on the same steamship we had sailed on from Beyrout to Constantinople. Bros. Carrington, Snow and Schettler, Sister Snow

and myself shipped on board the Vienna Br. Little, Clara, and T. W. Jennings remained on the Mars, not wishing to visit Athens. We have had very fine weather on the morning of the 7th. It is a beautiful land-locked harbor, which has been rendered famous by history and song, since the days of Theseus. Five miles carriage ride on a good road through cultivated but unfenced lands, brought us to our hotel in modern Athens. The city contains about 50,000 inhabitants, has many well built houses and wide, well paved, clean streets, which contrast favorably with the narrow ways and crooked, filthy streets of Jerusalem and Damascus, and other Turkish towns.

To-day I visited the Stadium, the place where the Olympic games were formerly performed once in four years. King George has renewed these games, and about 20,000 people witnessed the performance of wrestling, boxing, jumping, leaping, foot-racing, pole-climbing, &c. The successful competitors received their prizes from the hand of the Queen. The Amphitheatre is dug in an oval shape, with seats like stairs on each side, and could seat 50,000 or 60,000 people, and all see the exercises. I also visited the old Baths, which have recently been dug up—immense floors of Mosaic have been uncovered: they were some five feet underground. They were a very convenient set of baths.

I then went to the Areopagus, a climb to the summit of Mars Hill, which was somewhat difficult, the stones having been worn so smooth they were slippery. I stood on the stone which our guide said St. Paul stood on when he preached to the Athenians. Acts 17th chapter. I found a French barber and had my beard sheared.

I re-visited the Temple of Jupiter Olympus; sixteen columns fifty-two feet high still remain. Originally there were 124, ten feet square at the base and six and a half in the shaft. It was commenced 533 years before Christ and finished 130 after Christ, making over 600 years in building.

I then visited the Temple of Theseus, which retains a portion of its marble roof, which is the best preserved of any ruins I have seen.

I then went to the Greek Parliament, which is in session. We presented a note from the American Minister, Mr. John M. Francis of New York. We were immediately seated in the Diplomatic Gallery. About 100 Deputies were in the seats, the King's ministers were occupying their desks. A spirited debate was in progress in relation to a claim on the National Treasury, the payment of which was contested. The President governed the Assembly by ringing a bell, instead of using the gavel. The appearance of the Deputies was quite democratic, each one seeming to dress according to his taste or his custom at home. Some of them wore white skirts, which our guide told us was the Albanian dress. Dark hair and eyes predominated. The galleries, except the one we occupied, were crowded to suffocation. The question at issue seemed to excite deep interest both with the Deputies and in the galleries. The President had to jingle his bell several times, to prevent interruption of the Speaker.

A handsome new building is nearly finished, to accommodate the Parliament, which when done will make them much more comfortable.

This evening, I have arranged to visit the Acropolis by moonlight. I do not intend to imitate Mark Twain in stealing anybody's grapes, and consequently have no fear of being overtaken by the police.

On the evening of the 8th we were invited to tea at 8 o'clock p. m. at the residence of Mr. Francis, the American Minister. We met there Mr. Goodenough, the American Consul General of Constantinople. We had a pleasant visit. Eliza had a long conversation with Mrs. F., I with Mr. G., Brother Snow with Mr. E., and Brother Schettler with Charles S., son of the Minister. They all seemed deeply interested in our conversation, "Mormonism" being the sole topic of the evening. To-day Mrs. Francis called on Sister Eliza.

I expect to-morrow that we shall leave here about 4 o'clock p. m., and arrive at Trieste on the 17th, when I expect more letters.

Carriage hire here with good horses and seats for four, is three francs per hour. A guide who speaks English, eight francs per day. Hotel d'Estrangers gives us two meals per day, room, and lights for about three and a quarter dollars. Every place we visit costs extra—for instance, when we visited Parliament, the man who unlocked the box must have a fee. Beggars are not near as numerous as they were in Italy and Turkey. The Greek kingdom has doubled its population since its organization. The King and Queen are well liked and are doing all they know how to do, to develop the interests of the country. His garden contains some beautiful orange trees, loaded with ripe fruit, also date-palm trees. Pepper trees make a fine shade—they grow probably twenty feet high, and look something like the weeping willow. Barley is nearly ripe—the crops look fine. Beef, butter and honey of good quality are on our table, which is an improvement on the Turkey bill of fare.

There are five miles of railroad in Greece, from here to the sea. I met the Admiral and a number of officers of the American fleet. The Wabash and another war ship are here at anchor. The whole American squadron, consisting of six vessels, has been all winter on the coast of Spain; and Capt. Spalding informed me that this is the reason why we had not for once seen the American flag on a ship before. We had the flag waving from the top of Eliza's tent all through Palestine.

A Decatur, Ill., mechanic has invented a velocipede which can be propelled by one man at a greater rate of speed than a locomotive can attain.

The Michigan legislature proposes to make landlords who accept liquor sellers as tenants responsible under the liquor law for any damages that may accrue from the traffic.