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# THE LAND AND THE BOOK;

OR,

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN FROM THE MANNERS AND  
CUSTOMS, THE SCENES AND SCENERY OF

## THE HOLY LAND.

By W. M. THOMSON, D.D.,

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS A MISSIONARY OF THE A.B.C.F.M. IN SYRIA AND PALESTINE.

Maps, Engravings, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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EVERY sincere attempt to illustrate the Word of God is in itself commendable. On this fundamental fact the author rests his apology for obtruding the present work upon the notice of the public. Commentaries are daily multiplying; geographies and dictionaries, researches and travels almost innumerable, lend their aid to the student of the sacred page, and it is not proposed to add another to the long list. The author does not attempt a consecutive comment on any particular book of the Bible, but selects indiscriminately from all, such passages as contain the themes he desires to elucidate. The field is ample, and it is abundantly rich in subjects for scenic and pictorial description. Whether he has succeeded in working out his own idea or not must be left for others to determine, but, if he has failed, it has not been through want of opportunity to study the originals of which his pictures are to be copies. For a quarter of a century he has resided amid the scenes and the scenery to be described, and from midday to midnight, in winter and in summer, has gazed upon them with a joyous enthusiasm that never tired. The first impressions, corrected and improved by subsequent study and examination, are now reproduced for the eye of the public and the heart of the pious.

The author entertains the opinion that much has been published upon Biblical illustration which recent research has shown to be incorrect or rendered superfluous, and much, also, that does not properly belong to the subject. Erudite and curious inquiries into the life and conduct of

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patriarchs, prophets, and kings, for example, though valuable contributions to religious knowledge, are plainly out of place in such works; and the same remark applies to extended critical and exegetical discussion. In these and many other departments of Biblical literature, the student in the heart of Germany or America, surrounded by ample libraries, is in a better situation to carry on profitable inquiries than the pilgrim in the Holy Land, however long his loiterings or extended his rambles. But it is far otherwise in respect to the scenes and the scenery of the Bible, and to the living manners and customs of the East which illustrate that blessed book. Here we need the actual observer, not the distant and secluded student. To describe these things, and such as these, one must have seen and *felt* them, and this the author has done through many years of various vicissitude and adventure, and whatever of life and truth may be in his pictures is due solely to this fact. Here is his appropriate field, and the limit of his promise. Where he has been he proposes to guide his reader, through that "good land" of mountain, and vale, and lake, and river—to the shepherd's tent, the peasant's hut, the hermit's cave, and palace of kings, and temple of gods—to the haunts of the living and the sepulchres of the dead—to muse on what *has been*, and converse with what *is*, and learn from all what they can teach concerning the oracles of God.

A large part of these pages was actually written in the open country—on sea-shore or sacred lake, on hill-side or mountain top, under the olive, or the oak, or the shadow of a great rock: there the author lived, thought, felt, and wrote; and, no doubt, place and circumstance have given color and character to many parts of the work. He would not have it otherwise. That blessed book, at once his guide, pattern, and text, wears the same air of country life, and He who came from heaven to earth for man's redemption loved

not the city. To the wilderness and the mountain he retired to meditate and pray. Thither he led his disciples and the listening multitudes; and from seedtime and harvest, and flocks and shepherds, and birds and flowers, he drew his sweetest lessons of instruction. In this identical land, amid the same scenes, has the author of this work earnestly cultivated communion and intimate correspondence with this divine Teacher, and with the internal and external life of the Book of God; and what he has found and felt he has tried to trace upon the silent page for other eyes to see and other hearts to enjoy. Whether wisely done or otherwise, herein is revealed the reason of that rural *abandon* in matter and manner with which the reader is every where saluted.

Though the author has had his full share of personal "experiences" during his long residence in the East, yet want of space has compelled him to omit such details, except where they serve to bring out some circumstance bearing upon the general design of the work. And the same necessity obliges him to forego, to a great extent, mere moral and devotional reflections. Many of the topics discussed not only admit of, but seem to suggest and even require them; but something *must* be left out, and, whether right or wrong, the author thought it most in accordance with the specific design of his work to omit such "meditations." And yet it is obvious that we ought not to impose silence upon the thousand witnesses to the veracity of the Bible which meet the pilgrim at every turn in his pathway. Broken columns, and prostrate temples, and cities in ruin, must bear testimony to the inspiration of prophecy; and ravens and sparrows, and cedars and brambles, and fruits and flowers, will preach sermons and utter parables, and we shall not hesitate to listen when they begin to teach.

Finally, in this connection, should any of the author's

friends be disappointed in not finding more reference to the missionary operations with which he has been connected, he has no other apology to offer than *want of space*. A history of these various enterprises, American, English, Irish, and German, would require a separate work, and therefore must be omitted in this.

The "Land and the Book" is designed for general and popular reading rather than for the professional student, and therefore it has been deemed necessary to avoid dry textual exposition. In order to secure entire freedom in introducing into the current narrative the multifarious subjects to be illustrated, the author has adopted a modified form of dialogue, but he does not encumber his work with any complex machinery, any *dramatis personæ*. He is not writing a novel or a play, to teach manners and morals, or portray human character, and his traveling companion acts mainly as usher, to introduce *what needs to be introduced*. It is merely a device to smooth the transition from topic to topic, and from scene to scene, as occasion may require. This, in its present application, may be *new*, but for the purpose for which it is assumed it has many and important advantages.

The "pilgrimage" is continued through so much of the Land and of the year as to allow the author to treat of those passages in the Bible which refer to such matters in their appropriate place and time; and thus he does not speak of *harvest in winter*, nor of the *vintage in spring*, nor of *rains and storms in summer*, but of all in the seasons when they actually occur. There are also certain subjects which naturally group themselves around a few localities. For example, the battle-fields of the Bible are mainly in the southern part of Palestine, where Joshua, and Samson, and Samuel, and Saul, and David performed most of their exploits, and on the plains of Esdraelon and the Hûleh. Again, the

Parables have all a *natural basis*, upon which they are constructed by the divine skill of Him who spoke as never man spake, and these mostly cluster about Nazareth, Gennesaret, and Capernaum.

The pictorial illustrations have been prepared with much care, and beautifully executed, and add greatly not only to the interest, but also to the real value of the work. Many of them are original, and others selected from the best existing sources, and so corrected as to be more true to nature, and more appropriate to the book. In this department the author has been largely indebted to the pencil of his son, W. H. Thomson. The maps have been compiled and drawn with exclusive reference to the present work, and embody, it is believed, all the most valuable results of recent geographical explorations in the Holy Land.

Each volume is supplied with two copious and carefully-prepared indexes, one of *texts*, and the other of *names and subjects*; and the attention of the reader is particularly directed to them, as they will greatly facilitate reference to those parts of the work where the various subjects treated of, and the Scripture passages illustrated, are to be found.

And now, with the cheerful hope and fervent prayer that our pleasant pilgrimage together through the earthly Canaan may hereafter be resumed and perpetuated in the heavenly, the author bids his courteous reader a cordial *adieu*.

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