



JERUSALEM FROM THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

# 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.,

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## THE LAND AND THE BOOK.

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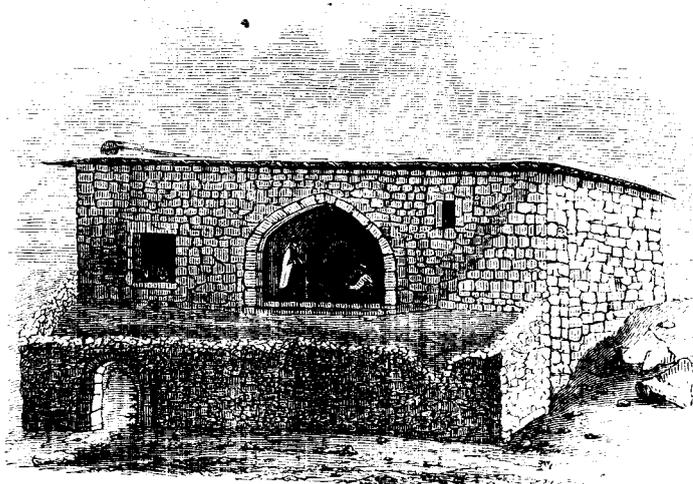
### XXV. TABIGA—KERSEH.

Thursday, March 23d.

I PROMISE you a most interesting ride to-day, and, while the loads go directly along the shore to the entrance of the Jordan, we will ascend toward the northeast for half an hour, to visit the site of Chorazin. This triangular part of Naph-tali, between the northwestern corner of the lake and Jisr Benat Yacobe, has ever been a wild, semi-deserted region, destitute of water, of trees, and of human habitations, and, of course, there are no *ruins* of importance upon it. It is, however, a fine pasture-field for the flocks of the Arabs, and I found it covered, in mid-winter, with camels and cattle from the cold Jaulan. Those parts adjacent to the shore have neither snow nor frost, and are clothed with grass and flowers in January, but the ascent is very great, not less than two thousand feet at the highest part of the road, and much higher west of it toward Safed, where the hills are often buried under deep snow. The flocks and their shepherds can therefore pass from winter to summer in an hour, and for several months can graduate their range so as to enjoy just the temperature which is most agreeable to their tastes. In May, however, the pasturage dries up, water fails, and the heat sends the flocks and herds to the higher and colder regions east of the Jordan. It is a ride of four hours from Khan Minyeh to the bridge, most of the distance over rough black basalt, interspersed in a few places with a white marble, intensely hard, and sufficiently compact to take a beautiful polish. Jub Yusuf—Well of Joseph—where Moslem

tradition locates the pit in which that unfortunate lad was cast by his envious brethren, is midway between the lake and the bridge. The *khan* there is like this of Minyeh, but not so dilapidated, though equally deserted. Indeed, there is not an inhabited house in the entire region. The land, however, is fertile, and in some coming day of peace and prosperity it will be a picturesque, fruitful, and most healthy province.

Before we pass entirely away from this vicinity, I wish to inquire whether there is any thing in the construction of modern Arab houses to explain the manner in which the man sick of the palsy was placed at the feet of Jesus. I have never been able to understand it.



AN ARAB HOUSE.

The record in Mark ii. 1-12 and Luke v. 18-26 states that there was such a dense crowd around our Lord that the four men could not force their way through it, and therefore they went to the roof of the house, broke up part of it, and let down the sick man from above. The following considerations may make this act intelligible. We must ban-

ish from our minds every form of European or American houses. Those of Capernaum, as is evident from the ruins, were, like those of modern villages in this same region, low, *very low*, with flat roofs, reached by a stairway from the yard or court. Jesus probably stood in the open *lewan*, and the crowd were around and in front of him. Those who carried the paralytic not being able "to come at him for the press," ascended to the roof, removed so much of it as was necessary, and let down their patient through the aperture. Examine one of these houses, and you see at once that the thing is natural, and easy to be accomplished. The roof is only a few feet high, and by stooping down, and holding the corners of the couch—merely a thickly-padded quilt, as at present in this region—they could let down the sick man without any apparatus of ropes or cords to assist them. And thus, I suppose, they did. The whole affair was the extemporaneous device of plain peasants, accustomed to open their roofs, and let down grain, straw, and other articles, as they still do in this country.

The only difficulty in this explanation is to understand how they could break up the roof without sending down such a shower of dust as to incommode our Lord and those around him. I have often seen it done, and have done it myself to houses in Lebanon, but there is always more dust made than is agreeable. The materials now employed are beams about three feet apart, across which short sticks are arranged close together, and covered with the thickly-matted thorn-bush called *bellan*. Over this is spread a coat of stiff mortar, and then comes the marl or earth which makes the roof. Now it is easy to remove any part of this without injuring the rest. No objection, therefore, would be made on this score by the owners of the house. They had merely to scrape back the earth from a portion of the roof over the *lewan*, take up the thorns and short sticks, and let down the couch between the beams at the very feet of Jesus. The end achieved, they could speedily restore the roof as it was before. I have the impression, however, that the covering, at least of the *lewan*, was not made of earth, but of