LIFE IN BIBLE LANDS; OR, ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURAL ALLUSIONS AND IMAGERY FROM THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE EAST

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Life in Bible lands; or, Illustrations of Scriptural allusions and imagery from the manners and customs of the East by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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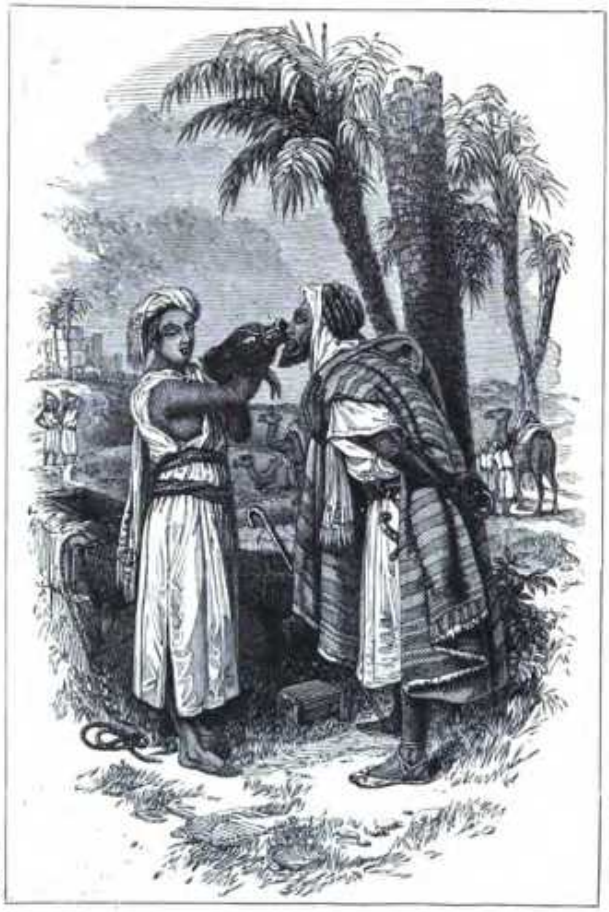
Trieste



REBEKAH AT THE WELL.

Page 44.

LIFE IN BIBLE LANDS;

OR,

Illustrations of Scriptural Allusions and Imagery

FROM

THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE EAST.

"The materials of a knowledge of the East are worthily turned to their highest and most fitting use, only when employed for a representation of the Sacred History as drawn out in its full proportions from the condensed and scattered records of the Scriptures."—
Dean Stanley.

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MDCCCLXX.

LIFE IN BIBLE LANDS.

Introduction.

MANY of the most interesting allusions and illustrations in Holy Writ pass unobserved or not understood by the youthful reader, because he is ignorant of the particular customs to which they refer. The imagery of the Bible is Oriental, and its atmosphere, so to speak, is Oriental; so that unless the student know something of Oriental life, the peculiar force and beauty of numerous passages it is impossible for him to feel. Our Saviour, for instance, made great use in His teaching of examples borrowed from the objects and scenes around Him; objects and scenes with which His hearers were necessarily familiar. How profitless, comparatively speaking, must those examples be to *us*, if we know nothing of the sources from which they were derived!

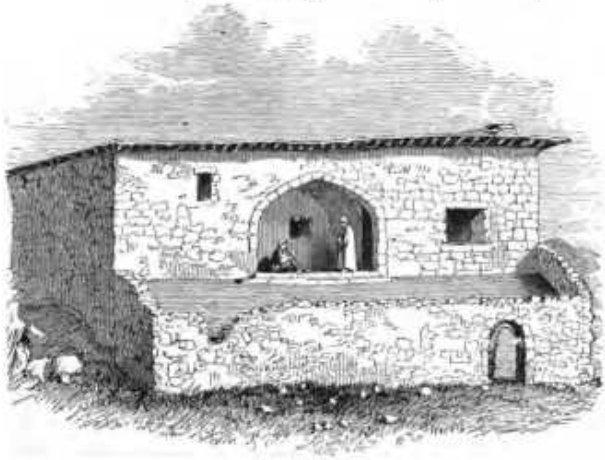
In the following pages an attempt has been made to place before the reader a brief but accurate outline of Life in Bible Lands, with the view of indicating what a flood of light it may be made to throw on the scriptural text. We bring before his eyes a few pictures of life in-doors and life

out-of-doors;—not professing to deal with so full and comprehensive a subject in aught but an imperfect manner, yet, it is hoped, saying enough to prove its importance, and to induce the reader hereafter to make it a branch of his diligent study.

Our attention will, in the first place, be necessarily attracted by the habitations which men make use of in Bible Lands.

HOUSES AND TENTS.

ZEPHANIAH (ii. 5, 6) predicts in his prophecies that the sea-coast shall become dwellings and cottages for shepherds



AN ARAB HOUSE.

and folds for flocks; and such is the aspect of the Syrian shore of the Mediterranean at this very day.

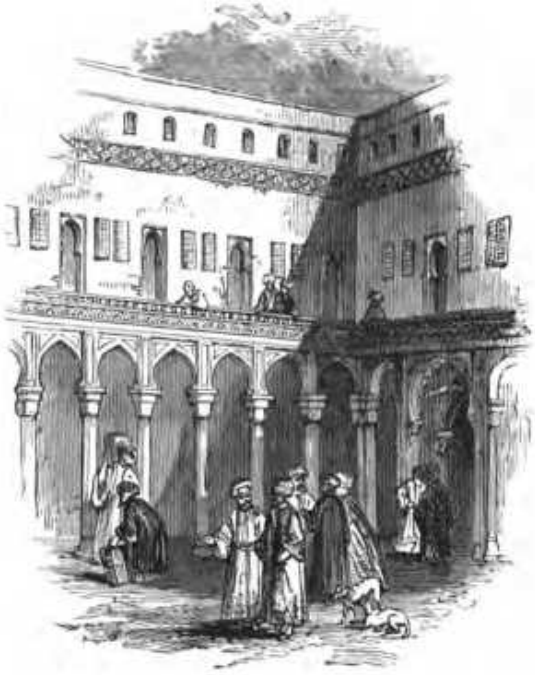
The houses of the poor generally consist of a single story,

like the huts of the Highland peasantry, and comprise but a single apartment, where the family sleep on the floor and the cattle on a kind of raised platform. Occasionally, indeed, a small court is attached, which forms the resting-place of the flocks by night. The windows are small holes, perhaps with wooden bars, high up in the wall. The roofs are flat, and of mud hardened or baked, affording an agreeable retreat in the hot nights of summer. These rude tenements, which are inferior in accommodation to the meanest peasant's hut in England, are built of mud or sun-dried brick, and therefore readily fall prostrate before the rains and winds. In some districts, however, stone is used.

In the large towns the houses are necessarily of a better description; and those belonging to the wealthier natives may challenge comparison with our European mansions, if not in those appliances which make up what we English call *comfort*, at all events in luxury of ornament. The materials are, and were, stone, marble, porphyry, basalt; carefully squared and fitted (Amos v. 11), and cemented with a mortar composed of sand, lime, and ashes. Sometimes cedar is employed, and shittim or acacia wood, olive, sycamore, algum, and cypress (1 Kings vi. 15, 16, 32–34; Isaiah, ix. 10), the wood-work being richly overlaid with gold, silver, and ivory.

An Eastern house generally presents a dead wall to the street, and one or more interior courts. The entrance-door is low, and over it projects a latticed window or kiosk. A passage from the outer-door leads into the first court, on which all the principal apartments look. Around the court runs a verandah, and over it a balustraded gallery.

Entering the interior, we find "the lofty rooms adorned with a rich inlaying of many colours, and illuminated writing on the walls. The floors are of marble. One side of any



FIRST COURT OF AN EASTERN HOUSE.

room intended for noonday retirement is generally laid open to a quadrangle, in the centre of which there dances the jet of a fountain. There is no furniture that can interfere with the cool, palace-like emptiness of the apartments. A divan (which is a low and doubly broad sofa) runs round the three walled sides of the room. A few Persian carpets (or rugs) are sometimes thrown about near the divan: they are placed without order, the one partly lapping over the other; and, thus disposed, they give the room an appearance of