

## THE IMMOVABLE EAST.

By PHILIP J. BALDENSPERGER.

*(Continued from Q.S., 1912, p. 13.)*

THE house in town does not at all resemble the house in the country, and, therefore, many passages in the Bible must be explained with reference to the house in town, while others can only refer to the house in the country. In town the house very much resembles a fortress, being built with big stones shut in among the other houses. It has one low entrance, above which a kind of *mâchicoulis* is often found, from which to observe the street or a visitor without being seen. The door (*bâb*) has a knocker of iron, and the visitor, after having knocked, is first scrutinized or else is asked who he is. If no man is in the house, he is not admitted; but if a man is in the house, and the door is opened, the visitor begs to be excused, calling aloud *dastûr*, a warning for the women to retire, or to veil themselves. The answer comes: "Your permission (*dastûrak*) is with you." Almost all the houses, called *dâr*<sup>1</sup> more often than *bêt*, are constructed on the same principles.

Immediately inside the door is a large court (*hōsh*) with a cistern (*bîr*) for rainwater. The mouth of the cistern is elevated above the level of the court and generally in a corner, and covered with a board to prevent uncleanness from entering, or also, that the children may not fall into it. About October or November these cisterns are empty. When the two spies of David came away from Jerusalem they arrived at Bahurim, where a man had a well (*bē'er*) in his court, whither they went down, and a woman spread a covering over the well's mouth (2 Sam. xvii, 18, 19). All around the court are rooms (*awedat*) serving different purposes. These lower rooms correspond to the chambers which Ezekiel saw about the temple

<sup>1</sup> *Dâr* is the fittest word for home, and is generally used in the towns only, originally a Bedawy word from the camp and "encircled home" in North Africa. The village is called *dîâr*, plural of *dâr*.

(Ezek. xl, 16). The rooms are used also in daytime in summer, being cooler, and have no windows, or only very small ones (*tākat*; cf. Ezek. xl, 16).

In front of the rooms is a gallery, where it is very agreeable for shade and light; it is called *riwāk*; this is very likely the "stories" of 1 Kings vi, 5.

As the townspeople generally call the house *dār*, they call the rooms, when an epithet is to be used, *bēt*; thus, "store-room," *bēt el-mūney*; "sitting-room," *bēt el-diwān*; "bed-room," *bēt el-nūm*, and so forth. Stores are put away in these lower rooms, and others may be reserved for the servants and women. The kitchen implements are put into one of these rooms, for they have no proper room for the kitchen, though sometimes a small cabinet is found in an odd corner and called *matbakh*; compare the "boiling-places," Ezek. xlv, 23. More generally there is only a hearth, called *marḥadat*, to boil the water for washing or for cooking. Chimneys do not exist (the word *madkhanet* is properly a smoke-hole), and they prefer to make the fire out of doors. The chimney of Hosea xiii, 3, was probably only the black sooty wall behind the fire-place. Besides this fixed fire-place they have movable hearths or fire-grates (*wojāk*), which are carried where they are wanted, either to keep the food warm or to warm the room and inmates in winter. Such a portable hearth was before King Jehoiakim of Judah in his winter-room, when he burned the roll presented by Baruch from Jeremiah (Jer. xxxvi, 22, 23). The hearth is also called *kanūn*, and was also known to the Israelites as *kiryōr*, the portable hearth put among the wood in Zech. xii, 6.

The court is paved with flag-stones (*ballāt*), for the water to run away as clean as possible into the cistern. Very often the mouths of the cisterns are made of marble which may have been in use for untold years. A rope and bucket are to be found lying or hanging above the opening so as to be always ready for use. A stable is often also to be found for the horse or donkey belonging to the owner, or simply for a guest's animal.

A flight of fifteen or twenty steps leads to the top of the first floor, a more or less wide terrace called *hadhīr*, surrounded by high walls with inlaid pots, through the bottom-holes of which one can survey the outside without being seen. The wall (*hāt*) is a shelter against indiscreet spying and against the wind; at the same time it serves for a look-out as the name, *hadhīr*, indicates. The

inner wall facing towards the court is low, and the top is usually furnished with flower-pots, of which the Oriental women are so fond. A room or so is generally built at the farther end of the terrace, belonging to the master of the house and the family—sometimes it is specially reserved for visitors.

The Hebrew house had very nearly the same construction. Besides the lower parts already described there was a flight of steps (Ezek. xl, 6) leading to the "upper chamber." The latter is to be met with also in the country and is known as *‘oliat*, in contrast to the *awedat*, the lower room.<sup>1</sup> The "upper chamber" was on the terrace or roof (*gāg*, 2 Kings xxiii, 12). The terrace was used to dry fruit, as in Jericho (Joshua ii, 6), or for family gatherings, and for walks without being observed from the outside. The "parapet" (Deut. xxii, 8) which was commanded by law to be built round the terrace, explains how David, taking his afternoon walk, could see without himself being seen (2 Sam. xi, 2). The "room" (Heb. *heder*)<sup>2</sup> was used by princely persons and women, or for special hiding-places in case of war, as Joseph's room (Gen. xliii, 30), Jehoshaphat's (2 Kings ix, 2), the bride's (Cant. i, 4), Samson with Delilah's (Judges xv, 1), or Israel's hiding-place (Isaiah xxvi, 20), and the like, whilst Elisha in Shunem (2 Kings iv, 10, 11) and Jeremiah (Jer. xxii, 13, 14) go to the "upper rooms."

The special rooms round the temple (*lēshākōth*) were for priests and strangers; we may compare the modern *zahat*. The lower rooms have no windows, or else only very small ones, whilst the upper rooms generally have in front a porch called *liwān*, and have one or more large windows called *tākat*; compare the "window" mentioned in the stories of Abimelech (Gen. xxvi, 8) and of Rahab (Joshua ii, 6). These windows are on the inside of the houses looking into the court, whilst the outside windows (*shubāk*) are very large and entirely protected by narrow trellis-work, so that the inmates can observe the street and gate without being seen. Very often on warm days, this place is used by one or more members of the family for an airing, or for cooking, for exhibiting flowers, and so forth. Sisera's mother looked through the *eshmāb* (Judges v, 28), and the unfortunate King Ahaziah of Israel, who was enjoying an afternoon in his trellis-work window (*sēbakāh*, 2 Kings i, 2), had not

<sup>1</sup> The pigeon-hole which is often below the stairs may perhaps be alluded to in Cant. ii, 14.

<sup>2</sup> [Really distinct from the modern *kadhīr* (see above).]

remarked that the wood was rotten, and fell down and died soon after. We only read of these windows with trellis-work in the towns, in Solomon's house, and lordly mansions. The country people, like the modern fellahin, had only the ordinary windows (*hallōn*). Some windows without the wooden trellis-work have an iron grating (*sha'iriyet*), probably the *harakkim* of Cant. ii, 9. These windows have shutters (the *tard* or *darfet*), which perhaps were also used on the Israelitish windows; Elisha tells King Joash to open the window (2 Kings xiii, 17). Glass windows were once very rare, but are becoming rapidly known in all newly-built houses.

The roof of the upper rooms is called *sattēh*, and is never used for anything, except in very few exceptions, to put things away out of the reach of children, or articles for drying. On the other hand, since it is in uninterrupted communication with the neighbouring houses, it is not always very useful to the owners. As the rooms are generally vaulted, the tops are not flat but have a cupola, covered with plaster, and through this the rain comes very often, especially when severe cold has broken the lime covering, and heavy rains follow. The narrow space left between the cupola and the unprotected walls of the upper roof may be the disagreeable spot alluded to by the writer of Prov. xxv, 24: "It is better to dwell in the corner (narrow space) of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house." Another writer well knew the dropping through these roofs: "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike" (Prov. xxvii, 15). The word *dālah*, which is used for dropping, is the same as the modern Arabic (دلف), used only for leaks through the roof. The dripping of water in the gutter (called *zur'b*) and in the streets (*seil*) can be avoided, but in a Palestinian room on a rainy day nothing more disagreeable can be imagined.

The floors of the rooms and terraces are generally paved with flag-stones (*ballūt*), but where the stones are too expensive they are simply plastered with lime and small stones, thus constituting the *midet*. The *raẓif* is the irregular pavement of uneven stones used for courts of the khān or the like, and the same root is used for the temple court (2 Kings xvi, 17; Ezek. xl, 17).

The middle of the room is empty, without any chairs, but along the wall or walls is one or more divans (ديوان)—the sofa, generally of wood and covered with a thin mattress and with cushions all around. The sofa may be called the only piece of furniture,

and therefore it is sometimes very luxurious; the wood may be carved, and the cushions and mattress covered with silk or velvet with embroidery. The name *divān* is not Arabic, but like many other words of Persian origin has now become thoroughly familiar. The true Arabic term was *mek'adet* or *metka*; the Hebrew uses *mittah*, so of Jacob in Egypt (Gen. xlviii, 2), David (1 Sam. xix, 13), and the sluggard turns on his *mittah* (Prov. xxvi, 14). The fine "couches" of Ezek. xxiii, 41, and Amos iii, 12; vi, 4, are divans covered with ivory.

The beds are called *frāsh* (from a verb "to spread") and consist sometimes of a thin mattress, or only of carpets or a mat (*hazīret*). On the thin mattress is placed a cushion or two, called literally "cheek-support," resembling the French *oreiller* ("ear-support"), and the Hebrew "head-supports" (in Gen. xxviii, 11; 1 Sam. xix, 13). There are no sheets; the covering *lihāf* is, however, used by everybody. These three or four articles constituting the bed are put away during the daytime into a niche in the wall, and "spread out" only at nighttime. Bedsteads are very rare, though they are sometimes found—called *tākhṭ* or *srīr*, the last being also for a cradle. The conjugal bed called *madja'* is a name very rarely used. The Hebrew's bed was generally called *mishkāb* (1 Sam. iv, 5; Job vii, 13), but sometimes they called it *yāzūa'*, which was spread in a wide place, or on the terrace in summer (Job xvii, 13; Psalms cxxxii, 3). The conjugal bed in Cant. i, 16, differed only in name ('*eres*'). The difference of the beds is shown very often, but more especially in Canticles. The writer, speaking of *their* bed (i, 16) says our '*eres*'; of *his* bed (iii, 1), he says *mishkāb*; whilst the *mittah* (iii, 7) is no other than the stately sofa in the reception room (see also Esther i, 6). The thick *lihāf* is called *kēsūth* in Job xxiv, 7; xxxi, 19, whilst the thinner *hērām* is perhaps the *marbaddīm* of Prov. vii, 16; xxxi, 22. The translation "pillows" for *kēsūthōth*, in Ezek. xiii, 18, is not very likely to be exact—the sense is not easily understood: "Woe to women that sew pillows upon all armholes (A.V., R.V. elbows) and make kerchiefs upon every stature (R.V. for the head) to hunt souls."

The carpet, *sijādet*, covering the floor, was originally very small and intended only for prayers (*sajjed*). The sofa already mentioned is always in one place, whilst low chairs (*harrāsi*, plural) are put away when not used—and they are more often not used—as well as the low table (*skamlet*) which is only employed at meals, so that the

rooms seem almost empty. The modern tables, *tawelet*, a word evidently derived from the Italian *tabula*, now begin to be employed, as well as a chest of drawers with a looking-glass (*merah*) and flower-vases on top. This is the whole of the furniture, which, except for the few modern articles mentioned, has been very much the same since the days of the prophet's wife in Shunem: Elisha having passed there several times, a *rich woman* built an upper chamber for the prophet and furnished it with a *mittah* (bed) and a table and a chair and a lamp (2 Kings iv, 10). Several cupboards are built into the wall, and in them are put the porcelain-ware and sweets, valuable spoons and so forth.

The walls and ceiling are whitewashed, and painted lines or flowers ornament the corners in red or blue (*cf.* Jer. xxii, 14). In the middle of the ceiling forming the centre of the vault is a big ring fixed into the building.

(*To be continued.*)

## THE BEDOUIN OF THE SINAITIC PENINSULA.

By W. E. JENNINGS-BRAMLEY.

(*Continued from Q.S., 1912, p. 20.*)

### XXVIII.—*Nekhl to Yelleg and el-Galla.*

THE road from Nekhl to Yelleg is most uninteresting: a large open plain with small undulations and many small watercourses, the only large ones being the Wādy el-Maithan and Wādy el-Baruk. These have a line of large bushes, either tarfa or rattan. In the case of the Wādy Maithan there is only rattan, it being a long open shallow wādy. On the second day the wind was so strong and carried so much sand, that it was impossible to see Yelleg in the north-west at all. We therefore stopped. Early March and April are bad months in Sinai.

Haji Mabruk told the story of his early life. He was a robber, stealing the cattle of his neighbours, when one day the Prophet sent him a dream in which all his bad ways were clearly shown.