

A SUMMARY  
OF  
BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES;

FOR THE USE OF  
Schools, Bible-Classes and Families.

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BY JOHN W. NEVIN, D.D.

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## P R E F A C E.

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THE following work was undertaken chiefly with a view of contributing some help to the great cause of Sunday-school education. That something of the kind is much wanted, for the use of common instructors, in the work of such education, cannot be doubted. The books in which such information as it is intended to contain is to be found, are not within the reach of most of those who are called to take upon them this character; and if they were, they are not adapted to answer effectually the want that is felt in the present case. Most of them have been written for the use of such as have far more than common advantages of education and learning, whose business leads them to much reading, and whose minds are trained to diligence and patience in the pursuit of knowledge. Even the few which have been designed for more popular and common use, are such that their advantages can never extend to the great majority of those who read the Bible: they are too large, and, of course, too expensive to be generally procured; they are too diffuse, and too much elevated in style, or darkened with learning, to be generally read or understood. Since the establishment of Sunday-schools, various short sketches of information on some particular points of Jewish Antiquities have been supplied in different publications intended for their use, which have, no doubt, answered a valuable purpose, so far as they extended; but all the advantage which such scattered fragments can secure must manifestly be very limited and imperfect, in comparison with what might be, and ought to be, derived from this quarter of scripture illustration. Evidently, a short,

simple, systematic compilation, bringing together, without technical phrase or learned discussion, the most essential points of the whole subject, in regular order, into small and convenient compass, is the only thing which can adequately meet the necessity that is experienced in this matter.

It is hoped that this present attempt may not be without something of its intended use, in furnishing such a compilation, easy to be procured and easy to be read, for the assistance of teachers. If it should in any measure answer this design, it will accomplish an object of vast usefulness. If, however, the remarks which have already been made are well founded, a work of this kind may be reasonably expected to be yet more extensively useful. As a help to the intelligent reading of the Scriptures, such a compilation, if not greatly defective in its form, is, no doubt, better suited for the use of *all* common readers, than any larger work.

It needs very little reflection, to be convinced of the importance of having some acquaintance with the circumstances, natural and moral, of the time and country in which the Bible was written, in order to read it with understanding. Though an inspired book, its language and style have been wisely conformed to the manner of *men*, for whose use it was designed; of course conformed, in these respects, to the particular manner of the people to whom it was at first directly communicated. Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but they were suffered, at the same time, to speak and write in that style which the general usage of the age, modified by his own peculiar genius and taste, naturally led each one to adopt. Hence, the sacred books of Scripture, like other books, are stamped throughout with the lively impression of the place and period in which they were originally published. It is found not only in the language itself, but in unnumbered references, direct and indirect, to the existing state of things among those who were appointed first to receive them. Historical facts, objects of surrounding nature, the productions of art, with domestic, social, religious, and civil usages, are continually urged before

the reader's mind, and noticed as things with which he is supposed to be perfectly familiar. And thus familiar they were to the ancient Jew. But widely different is our situation in this respect. Many hundred years separate us from the times of original revelation. And if Time had left the physical and moral scenery of Israel's ancient land untouched, instead of turning all into a waste, it would still be many hundred miles remote from the spot of our dwelling. With a different climate, we have different feelings; with a different location, different forms of nature around us; with a different education, a widely different manner of life. We are placed, therefore, under a double difficulty, when we come thus circumstanced to read the Bible. We are destitute of the knowledge and feelings of the ancient Jew, and, at the same time, we have notions and views of our own, which we are constantly liable to substitute in their stead. Hence, if no remedy be supplied, we must often be left altogether in the dark, by meeting with terms and images, the objects of which are utterly unknown; and often we shall derive to ourselves an entirely strange and unfounded conception of the writer's meaning, by affixing ideas to other images and terms, such as our habits of thought and speech may suggest, but which are foreign, in no small degree, from the usage of oriental antiquity.

What then is the remedy for this inconvenience? Evidently to seek acquaintance with the time, and the region, and the people, with which the Bible had to do in its first revelation:—as far as possible, become familiar with the history of the Jewish nation, the scenery of Palestine, the religion, government and manners of its ancient wonderful people. To read the Bible, in many parts, with a proper sense of its meaning, we need so much familiarity with these things as to be able to transport our minds away from all around us, and to clothe them, in the midst of Judea itself, with all the moral drapery that hung about the Israelitish spirit ages ago. We need to be conversant with the mountains, the plains and the streams; the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; the labours of the farmer and the

habits of the shepherd; we need to walk, in fancy's vivid vision, through the streets of Jerusalem; to mingle with the inmates of the Jewish dwelling; to participate in their seasons of festive joy, and to sympathize with their sorrow in the day of calamity and bereaving death; we need to go up to the temple, to unite in its worship, to behold its solemn rites, and to admire the beautiful grandeur of its scene. True, indeed, *extensive* acquaintance with these things is to be expected only in the scholar; the common reader of the Bible is not favoured with equal opportunity; but is he therefore to content himself with *entire* ignorance? Assuredly not. The fact that such knowledge is wanted now, through the providence of God, to illustrate every page of the Bible, evinces it to be the will of God that *all* should, as far as they have the power, endeavour to acquire it. The same fact must lead every person who loves the Bible diligently to seek it, with every other help that may, under the blessing of the Holy Ghost, contribute to the profitable study of the precious book.



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BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES.

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PART I.

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# BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES.

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## PART I.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE.

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#### SECTION I.

##### NAMES AND DIVISIONS OF THE LAND.

THE country in which the Jews anciently lived has been distinguished by different names. It is called, in Scripture the *Land of Canaan*, because it was first settled by Canaan, the youngest son of Ham, and because his descendants, the *Canaanites*, dwelt in it, till the "measure of their iniquity was full," and God destroyed them, to make room for his own people. It is styled the *Land of Promise*, on account of the promise made to Abraham, that it should be given to his seed for an inheritance, when he himself sojourned there as a stranger in a strange land. From the names of the nation to whom it was given, it is called the *Land of the Hebrews*; the *Land of Israel*; and the *Land of Judah*. Because it was chosen by God as the country in which his true worship should be preserved, and was long honoured with his peculiar presence and care, it is often named, the *Holy Land*; and once, by Hosea, the *Lord's Land*. It is also called *Palestine*: this name is very old, (Ex. xv. 14;) it is the same as *Philistia*, meaning, properly, the *Land of the Philistines*; and then used in a larger sense, for the whole country of Canaan, because the Philistines were so important a people among the nations by whom it was first settled. This last is the most convenient name, and is now become the most common, in speaking of the whole country which the ancient Jews inhabited. It will, therefore, be the one most generally used for that purpose, in the present work.

For many years, the whole land, from the mountains of Lebanon in the north, to the borders of Edom in the south,

and from the great Mediterranean Sea on the west, to the mountains of Gilead eastward, remained united under one government. Each of the twelve tribes had its particular portion assigned by lot, in which it dwelt separate from the others; but all together made one people and one nation. On the east side of Jordan, Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, had their inheritance: all the others were settled west of that river. But immediately after the death of Solomon, this beautiful union was broken asunder. Two kingdoms occupied the land instead of one. The *Kingdom of Judah* lay to the south, taking in the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The other ten tribes revolted from the house of David, and formed all the country north of Benjamin, together with that which lay east of Jordan, into a new government. This was called the *Kingdom of Israel*; frequently, by the prophets, *Ephraim*, because that was the principal tribe, and the one in which the capital city of the kingdom stood; and sometimes, from the name of its capital, the whole kingdom was called *Samaria*.

In the time of our Saviour, the land of Palestine was divided into several provinces, under the Roman government. On the west side of Jordan, the northern part, as far down as the lower end of the lake of Gennesareth, was called *Galilee*. Part of this was named *Galilee of the Gentiles*, because it bordered on the land of the heathen; and also *Upper Galilee*, because it lay farthest north and abounded in mountains. The southern part of it was called *Lower Galilee*. It took in all the country directly west of the Gennesareth lake, and was, in general, a rich and fruitful plain. This particular district enjoyed, more than any other, the presence of Jesus Christ, while he was on earth. Hence he was called the *Galilean*, and his disciples are styled *Men of Galilee*. (Acts i. 11.)

South of Galilee lay *Samaria*, so called from the city of that name. It embraced the lower part of what had once been the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes. The origin of the name and of the city to which it was first given, is related 1 Kings xvi. 24. The Samaritans were a mixed race, settled in the country after the captivity of the ten tribes.\*

South of Samaria was the country of *Judea*. Sometimes this name seems to have been used for the whole land of Palestine, in the time of Christ; but more commonly and properly, only for that part which, before the captivity, had been the kingdom of Judah, including all the country south of

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\* See the history of their rise, in the 17th chapter of the Second Book of Kings.

Samaria. From this account of the situation of each province, it appears, that any person going directly from Galilee to Judea "must needs go through Samaria," (John iv. 4,) because it lay just between the two. That part of Judea which lay farthest south was inhabited principally by descendants of the ancient Edomites. They had settled themselves there while the Jews were in captivity at Babylon, having been driven from their own country, which lay just below, by the violence of war, and finding none to hinder them from taking possession of the land. When the Jews returned, they were, for a long time, too weak to recover their territory out of their hands: the Edomites, or Idumeans, as they were then called, still continued to dwell in the southern border. At length, however, a little more than a hundred years before the coming of Christ, John Hyrcanus, the great Jewish prince, conquered them completely, and compelled them either to leave the country or to embrace the religion of the Jews. They chose to change their religion rather than their place, and, accordingly, from that time, became a part of the Jewish nation. Still, that part of the country in which they lived continued to be called *Idumea*, and the people *Idumeans*, long after. (Mark iii. 8.)

The country *beyond Jordan* was broken up into seven or eight different provinces. As, however, these divisions seem to have been not very clearly defined, and more than once altered, it is not easy to describe exactly their situation: nor is it necessary, since only a part of them are so much as named in the New Testament, and these scarcely more than mentioned. It is enough to know that *Decapolis* was a tract of country lying east of the lake of Gennesareth, and stretching somewhat above it, also, towards the north: that *Iturea* and *Trachonitis*, of which Philip was tetrarch, (Luke iii. 1,) took in the country still farther north, though the lower part of Iturea was probably the same as the upper part of what was called the region of Decapolis; and that *Abilene*, mentioned in the same passage, was the most northern district of all, lying in a valley formed by the mountains of Lebanon, not far westward from Damascus.

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## SECTION II.

### FACE OF THE COUNTRY.

PALESTINE is a mountainous country. Two great ranges seem to run through the whole length of the land; one on the east and the other on the west side of Jordan; not in one regular, unbroken chain but frequently interrupted by valleys,

and shooting off in irregular heights, sometimes to one side and sometimes to the other, so as occasionally to leave a considerable plain through the middle of the country. Hence, the same range is called by different names, in different regions. The *Mountains of Gilead* formed the eastern range. The southern part of these mountains was called *Abarim*. From the high summit of one of these, called *Nebo*, Moses surveyed the whole land of Canaan, before he died. The northern part of the same range was named *Bashan*; it was much celebrated for its stately oaks and excellent pastures, where numerous herds of the finest cattle were fed. Hence, there is often allusion made in the Bible to the *oaks of Bashan*, and the strong *bulls of Bashan*, (Psalm xxii. 12, Isa. ii. 13, &c.) This range joins the *Mountains of Lebanon*, on the north, in that part which was anciently called *Hermon*. Lebanon abounded in lofty cedars, in choice fir trees and refreshing springs of water. Its highest summits are covered with continual snow.

Stretching down toward the south, the western range spreads itself, in numerous ridges, all over Galilee of the Gentiles. In lower Galilee, its principal appearance was confined to the western border, near the Great Sea, leaving a great part of the country level, with only here and there a separate height rising on the prospect, such as Mount *Tabor*, where our Saviour is supposed to have been transfigured, or the Mount of *Gilboa*, where Saul was defeated and slain. Several of these heights were frequented by our Saviour. He was accustomed to "go out into a mountain to pray," and sometimes continued there "all night, in prayer to God," (Luke vi. 12;) and on one of them, he preached the remarkable sermon recorded by Matthew in his gospel. (Chaps. v. vi. vii.) The most considerable mountain in this region is *Carmel*, situated on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It was exceedingly fruitful, as is intimated by its name, which means, *a vineyard of God*. On the top of this mountain, Elijah the prophet prayed for rain, in the days of Ahab, while his servant went seven times to look for the cloud, till at last it rose like a man's hand over the western sea. (1 Kings xviii. 42—44.) Farther down, toward the south, the same general range was called the *Mountains of Israel*, and the *Mountains of Ephraim*. Among these were Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, separated from each other by a small valley, in which stood the ancient city of Shechem, called, in the New Testament, Sychar. The *Mountains of Judah* were the continuance of the range, as it passes southward, through the territory of that tribe, to the ancient heritage of Edom. These mountainous tracts abound with caverns, which are sometimes

found of great size. In times of danger from enemies, it was anciently common to seek refuge and shelter in such natural hiding-places. To "enter into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth," was, therefore, an expression that represented a season of distress and dismay. (Isa. ii. 19.) The great caves of Judah afforded no small protection to David, in the time of his cruel persecution by Saul. Robbers, also, were accustomed to conceal themselves in the same sort of retreats; and to this day, the large caverns of Palestine are not unfrequently made, in this way, as they were in the days of our Saviour, *dens of thieves*.

As so great a proportion of the land is covered with mountains and hills, a tract of level country of any extent was regarded with more notice than in countries like our own: hence, every such plain had its distinguishing name. The most noted among them was the *Plain of Jezreel*, or, as it is sometimes called, the *Great Plain*. It reached entirely across the country, from Mount Carmel and the sea to the bottom of lake Gennesareth, about ten miles. It has been the scene of several great battles: there Barak discomfited the mighty army of Sisera, so that "there was not a man left," (Judges iv. 16;) and there, also, king Josiah fell, when he went out and fought in disguise with Necho, king of Egypt. (2 Kings xxiii. 29.) Another plain lay along the Mediterranean Sea, from Mount Carmel to the southern border of Judah. The upper part of this was called *Sharon*, a name that belonged also to two other places. There was also the "region round about Jordan." (Matt. iii. 5.) This was a tract of level country, on the sides of that river, from the lake of Gennesareth to the Dead Sea, about twelve miles broad.

*Wildernesses* and *Deserts* are frequently mentioned in the Scriptures; but we must not suppose that these always mean desolate regions without inhabitants. The Jews gave the name of desert, or wilderness, to any tract of country that was not cultivated. There were accordingly two kinds of deserts. First, such as we are accustomed to understand by that name in our own age; plains of barren sand, where scarce a fountain of water can be found, and only the most scanty herbage can grow. Such as these are not found in Palestine itself; but, in the neighbouring country of Arabia, have always been well known. The other kind of deserts were mountainous tracts of country, thinly inhabited, and chiefly used for the pasturing of cattle; less fruitful than other parts of the land, but not without considerable growth of different wild productions, with sufficient supply of water. Such were the *wildernesses* of

Judah, mentioned in the history of David, and the "Wilderness of Judea," in which John began to preach, (Matt. iii. 1,) as well as the *deserts* in which he lived "till the day of his showing unto Israel." (Luke i. 80.) One of the most dreary and barren of these deserts lay between the Mount of Olives and the Plains of Jericho, and became a favourite lurking place for thieves or robbers, where they fell upon travellers on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. (Luke x. 30.) So many robberies were committed there, that it was called the *Bloody Way*. Into some part of this wild region, probably, our Saviour was led by the Spirit, "to be tempted of the devil," after his baptism. (Matt. iv. 1.)

There is only one river in Palestine that deserves the name; this is the Jordan. The other streams that are sometimes called rivers, become important only when they are swelled with floods of rain or melting snow and ice from the mountains. Then they dash and roll along with a great deal of noise and force; but when the drought of summer comes, they sink down into mere brooks, and often are dried up altogether. Hence, Job, because his friends had disappointed his expectation, and brought him only reproach instead of comfort, compares them to such streams: "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid; what time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their way are turned aside: they go to nothing and perish." (Job vi. 15—18.)

The *Jordan* runs from Mount Lebanon to the Dead Sea, passing through the lake of Gennesareth in its way. In the spring, when the snows of Lebanon melt, it rises above its common banks: from this circumstance, it has two channels; one far wider than the other, with banks of its own, to hold the water in the time of this flood. It was in the spring, the harvest-time of Palestine, during this swelling of the river, that the Israelites, in the time of Joshua, passed over, at the command of God, into the land of Canaan; when "the waters above stood and rose up upon an heap very far," till the whole nation had gone over the dry channel. (Josh. iii. 15, 16.) The space between the outer and inner bank, on each side, which (except in the spring) remains dry, is grown over with thick bushes and reeds, where wild beasts find a safe hiding place, until the yearly rise of the river compels them to fly: whence the expression, to "come up as a lion from the swellings of Jordan." (Jer. xlix. 19.)



The *lake of Gennesareth*, through which the Jordan flows, (called, also, the *Sea of Galilee*, because it lay just east of that country, and the *Sea of Tiberias*, from a city of that name which stood on its shore,) is filled with clear, pure water, excellent to drink, and abounds with different kinds of fish. On account of these advantages, it was a common saying among the Jews, that "God loved that sea more than all other seas in the world." It has its bed in a valley surrounded by lofty and steep hills. Here, the disciples of our Lord pursued their business of fishing: over its beautiful bosom the Redeemer himself often sailed: when its waves were tost with the tempest they heard his voice and were still: and when he willed to walk upon its waters, they bore him up like solid ground.

The *Dead Sea*, called, also, the *Sea of the Plain* and the *Salt Sea*, into which the Jordan empties all its waters, is spread over the ruins of four ancient cities, destroyed for their wickedness, by a miracle from God. (Gen. xix. 24, 25.) It too, like the lake just mentioned, is surrounded with high hills, except on the corner toward Jerusalem, where it is bounded by a barren, scorched plain. Its waters are bitter and nauseous, and more salt than those of the ocean; and the land around it is so filled with salt that it will not produce plants. The whole appearance of the place is dismal, as if the wrath of the Almighty were abiding upon it still.

The land of Palestine is highly praised, in the Scriptures, for its natural advantages. It is described as a "good land and a large, a land flowing with milk and honey." (Ex. iii. 8) "A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey;" a land wherein the people should eat bread without scarceness, and lack nothing; whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass. (Deut. viii. 7—9.) No country in the east could boast such a variety of blessings. Egypt alone could compare with it in fruitfulness of soil; but, then, Egypt was never cheered with showers of rain: it was watered only by the yearly overflowing of the river Nile. Egypt, too, was not adorned with mountains and hills; and, of course, could not abound in the same variety of productions. Nothing like the *glory of Lebanon*, or the *excellency of Carmel*, the *cold flowing waters of the rock*, or the *springs of the valleys*, was found in all its extent. Hence, Moses tells the Israelites, that Egypt, with all its advantages, was by no means equal to the land which they were going to inherit. "The land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt from

which ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; but the land whither ye go to possess it, is *a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven.*" (Deut. xi. 10, 11.)

### SECTION III.

#### CLIMATE.

THE weather in Palestine, as in our own country, varies in different places and at different times. The year seems to have been divided, at a very early period, into SIX SEASONS, each consisting of two months. We find them all mentioned in God's promise to Noah, after the flood: "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest and cold and heat and summer and winter shall not cease." (Gen. viii. 22.) These same divisions are found among the Arabs to this day.

HARVEST began some time in the first part of our April, and so ended in the first part of June. During this season, the weather is generally very pleasant: towards the close of it, however, it begins to grow uncomfortable through heat. SUMMER, or the time of fruits, followed the season of harvest, and lasted the next two months. During this time, the heat in that country becomes more and more severe; so that the inhabitants choose to sleep under the open sky, on the roofs of their houses. The HOT SEASON came next, beginning in the middle of August: the early part of this period is excessively warm; but toward the end of it, the weather gradually grows less oppressive.

From the middle of April to the middle of September, it neither rains nor thunders: hence, in the time of Samuel it was considered a miracle, when, in answer to his prayer, it thundered and rained in the time of harvest. (1 Sam. xii. 17.) And hence, the ancient proverb, "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." (Prov. xxvi. 1.) Sometimes, in the beginning of harvest, a cloud is seen in the morning, but as the sun rises, it vanishes away. (Hos. vi. 4.) Afterward, during May, June, July and August, not a solitary cloud appears, and the earth receives no moisture but from the dews of the night. These dews fall far more plentifully there, than any in our part of the world; so that those who are exposed to them become wet to the skin. In Solomon's Song, the Bridegroom says, "my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Because they are so heavy and so important, they are often mentioned in the Scriptures among

the rich blessings of the country, and the *dew* is everywhere used as a symbol of the divine goodness. In the morning, however, it is speedily dried up, according to the beautiful allusion of Hosea, (vi. 4 :) "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." The stronger plants, by nourishment received each night from these gentle showers, are enabled to withstand the heat of the day; but all the smaller herbs, unless they grow by some rivulet of water, wither and die. The country is covered with dreariness; the fountains and brooks are in a great measure dried; and the ground becomes so hard, that it often splits open with large clefts. The heat is rendered still more distressing, if the east wind happens to blow for a few days; this is dry and withering, and proves very injurious to the vines and the crops of the field. Hence, it is used as an emblem of great calamity: "Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up." (Hos. xiii. 15.)

After the hot season, came SEEDTIME; it lasted from the first part of October to the first part of December. During this season, the weather is various—often misty, cloudy and rainy. The air, at the commencement of this period, is still very warm; as it advances, it becomes continually cooler, till toward the end of it, the snow begins to fall upon the mountains. WINTER was made up of the two following months. In this season, snow frequently falls, but seldom lies a whole day, except on the mountains; thin ice also is formed, which melts as soon as the sun rises to any height; the north winds are chill; thunder, lightning and hail, are frequent, with heavy showers of rain; the roads become difficult to travel, especially among the mountains: whence our Lord told his disciples to pray that their *flight might not be in the winter*. (Matt. xxiv. 20.) The brooks are filled, and streams that were scarcely noticed before, swell into the likeness of rivers, rushing in every direction through the land. The remainder of the year, from the first half of February to the first half of April, was called the COLD SEASON, because, in the beginning of it, the weather is still cold, though it soon grows warm, and, in some places, quite hot. During this time, the rains still continue, with frequent thunder, lightning and hail. From the commencement of it, the earth begins to put forth the appearance of spring; the trees are soon covered with leaves, and the fields with flourishing grain, or flowers of every different hue.

From seedtime to harvest, Palestine is watered with numerous showers of rain. According to the accounts of travellers, a rain of two or three days falls in the early part of October. By this, the ground is prepared for ploughing and sowing; being before so hard, that it could not receive cultivation, and so dry, that seed cast upon it could not possibly grow. A season of clear weather, of about twenty days, follows, which the farmer improves, if he is wise, as his most favourable seedtime. When this is over, the rains return with plentiful fall. These first heavy showers, with which the rainy season commenced after the long drought of summer, were called the *former or early rains*. In like manner, the rain that fell just before harvest, in the spring, was called the *latter rain*, because with it the rainy season ended: it comes about the beginning of April, and was considered necessary, to bring the crops forward to their full perfection. *The early and the latter rain* are mentioned, in Scripture, as the rich blessing of God; since, when these were rendered sure, the period between them being always abundant with showers, the crop of the husbandman could hardly fail to be good. The quantity of rain that falls between seedtime and harvest is very great. Sometimes it descends in torrents, rushing down the hills, and sweeping away even houses and cattle that may fall in the way. To these violent rains our Saviour refers, beautifully and impressively, at the close of his sermon on the mount: "The rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, &c." (Matt. vii. 25, 27.)

Through the winter, the weather is extremely various, as it is felt at different times and in different places. On the higher mountains, it is exceedingly cold, while, at the same time, it is found not unfrequently, in the plains, quite warm. Some of the people pass the whole year without fire, though it is considered agreeable, and for more delicate persons, necessary, from December to March. The nights are often severely cold, even after the warmest days. "In the day, says Jacob, the drought consumed me, and the frost by night." (Gen. xxxi. 40.) The snow falls in large flakes, equal in size to a walnut, and has more resemblance to locks of wool than it has in our country. "He giveth snow like wool." (Ps. cxlvii. 16.)

When the sky was red in the evening, it was considered a sign of fair weather on the next day, but if it happened to be so in the morning, it led them to expect rain, as appears from the words of our Saviour, (Matt. xvi. 2, 3 :) "When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red; and in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is

ed and lowering." A cloud rising from the west also gave warning of rain: "he said to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower, and so it is." (Luke xii. 54.)

WINDS. The east wind was the most injurious. In the summer, as has been said, it was dry and hot; withering, as it passed along, the herbage of the field. (Ps. ciii. 15, 16.) In the winter, it was cold and still without moisture, and left a sickly blight upon the grain wherever its influence fell. It was also particularly dangerous at sea: "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." (Ps. xlviii. 7.) Every wind coming from any direction between east and north, or east and south, was called an east wind. Such was that tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon, that caused the wreck of the vessel in which Paul was sailing to Rome. (Acts xxvii. 14.) They are still common in that sea, and dreaded by the sailors. The west wind, coming from the sea, generally brought rain. That which came from the north is described by Solomon as *driving away rain*. (Prov. xxv. 23.) And Job tells us that *cold and fair weather are from the north*, (xxxvii. 9, 22:) while the whirlwind more frequently rose from the south; and the winds from that quarter ordinarily brought heat; though sometimes the southern breezes appear to have been considered agreeable.

THE SIMOOM. There is a wind that blows at times in some countries of the East, of the most terrible character. It comes in a stream from over the burning sands of the desert, bearing poison and death with its course. Its approach is signified by the appearance of distant clouds slightly tinged with red; the sky loses its serenity, and becomes gloomy and alarming. As the current draws nearer, it presents to the eye a hazy aspect, resembling a sheet of smoke, coloured with purple, such as is seen in the rainbow. Happily, its path is never broad, generally measuring less than a hundred feet, and its rapid flight soon carries it over the country, not allowing it to be felt at any one point more than eight or ten minutes. At the same time, it always keeps about two feet above the surface of the ground. Persons, therefore, who see it coming, may save their lives, by throwing themselves instantly flat upon the earth, with their faces downward, and breathing as little as possible till it is past. This is the way commonly practised to avoid its deadly touch. A man would be equally secure if he could place himself about fifteen feet *above* the ground, as the current of the wind is generally not more than twelve feet high. Camels and other animals are instinctively taught, when they perceive its approach, to thrust their heads down and bury their nostrils in

the earth. Men, however, are often destroyed by its blast. It comes with such amazing rapidity, that it overtakes them on their feet before they are aware, and thus they receive its fatal, suffocating vapour into their lungs. They fall down directly, and lie without motion or life. If one of their limbs is shaken, to arouse them, it falls off; and very soon, the whole body turns black, with mortification spread throughout. It is especially dangerous when it comes in the night. Thousands, it is said, have, in more than one instance, perished in a single night, from its desolating breath. This wind is called, by the Arabs, *Simoom*, and, by the Turks, *Samyel*. It is supposed, by some, that the prophet intended the same, when he compared the coming judgments of God to a *dry wind of the high places in the wilderness*. (Jer. iv. 11.)

## CHAPTER II.

### NATURAL HISTORY.

#### SECTION I.

##### OF VEGETABLE PRODUCTIONS.

MOSES describes the land of Palestine, as a *land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey*; and the Scriptures abound with allusions to different kinds of trees and plants. Solomon, we are told, left a book on this subject: "He spake of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." (1 Kings iv. 33.) If we had this book, we should, no doubt, know all about the different productions of the country in his time; but as it has been long since lost, we must rest satisfied with such general knowledge as can be gathered from the occasional notices found in the Bible, compared with the observations of travellers who have visited the east in modern times.

##### WILD TREES.

The *Cedar*, to which such frequent allusion is made in Scripture, is a most stately tree. Its roots spread far around below; it rises to a lofty height; its branches reach a great distance out on every side, forming a large and delightful shade,



Cedar Tree.

and remaining covered with green leaves from one end of the year to the other. Its trunk often becomes exceedingly large, sometimes measuring twelve yards around; the wood is of a beautiful brownish colour, with a pleasant smell; being somewhat bitter, it is not touched by worms, so that it has been known to last in a building two thousand years. The principal growth of cedars was anciently on Mount Lebanon: most of them, however, have since been cut down, so that now only a few can be found, growing amid the snows in the highest part of the mountain. Kings, great men, and proud men, are compared to cedars, on account of their *strength* or their *loftiness*; so also the righteous, on the other hand, in allusion to their *usefulness* and *beauty*. (Ps. xcii. 12.)

*Oaks* abounded anciently in different parts of Palestine. Those which grew on Bashan were considered peculiarly fine. The broad and refreshing shade which they supplied was particularly grateful in that warm climate. It was common, in early times, to choose such a shade as the most pleasant place for setting up a tent. Under the shadow of the oak, also, idols were often erected by the corrupt, where they resorted from time to time, to engage in their abominable worship; and sometimes whole groves of this venerable tree were thus turned into retreats of impiety and shame, on account of the agreeable and secret shelter which they afforded.

Under the name of oak, in our translation of the Bible, is

BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES.



Oak Tree.

included, (besides the common tree so called,) the *Terebinth* or *Turpentine* tree which belongs to the east. This is a large evergreen tree, with wide-spreading branches and numerous leaves. If allowed to stand, it is said that it will live a thousand years; and when it dies, its place is soon supplied by a new trunk, rising on the same spot, to equal size, and flourishing to an equal age. It was on account of this lasting character, and because of the single and separate manner in which they often grew, that these trees were sometimes used to designate particular places; and an aged *Terebinth* was spoken of with something of the same sort of distinction as that with which we make mention of a castle or a city. Thus we read of the oak by Shechem, the oak in Ophrah, the oak in Jabesh, &c., as being perfectly well known to everybody that had ever been in those places. Several such trees grew in the region of Hebron, where Abraham dwelt a considerable time. Mamre, the brother of Aner and Eschol, was a personage of chief importance



in that district, to whom it especially belonged. Hence, it was called, according to the usage just noticed, the *Oaks*, or *Terebinths of Mamre*; for this seems to be what we are to understand by the *Plains of Mamre*, where the ancient patriarch pitched his tent. Under the shade of one of these long-living trees, his simple dwelling stood; and it is said, that the very same tree continued standing till after the time of our Saviour. There might have been one growing on the same spot.

The *Fir tree* grows to a great height, and continues, like the cedar and the terebinth, green all the year. It was anciently used for building and for making furniture. It grew especially on Lebanon and Carmel. Several other kinds of trees grew wild on the mountains; such as the tall, straight *Cypress*, used at times for the making of dumb idols, because its wood refused to rot, and the stately *Pine*, well known in every quarter of the world. On lower grounds, along the mountain foot, or by the sides of the brook or river stream, or over the bosom of the fruitful plain, grew various trees and shrubs of humbler appearance. Among these were the *Linden*, or *Teil tree*, the *Alder*, the *Poplar*, the *Willow*, the *Laurel* and the *Myrtle*. This last is a large shrub, sometimes growing to the size of a small tree, very common in the valleys of Palestine. It is perpetually covered with leaves of the most beautiful green, and in its season, produces a great abundance of rose-like flowers, which delight the eye, and breathe a most fragrant perfume on all the air around.

The *Shittim-wood*, so frequently mentioned in Scripture, does not appear to have grown in the land of Palestine. There is the best reason to believe that it was the wood of the black *Acacia*. This tree flourishes in some parts of Egypt, and abundantly through the deserts of Arabia. It is of the size of a large mulberry tree, with rough bark and spreading branches well supplied with thorns. The wood is hard, tough, and capable of receiving from the hands of the carpenter a very smooth and beautiful polish. It produces flowers of an excellent fragrance. Hence, Isaiah joins the Shittah tree with the myrtle, and others held in esteem for beauty or richness of smell. (Isa. xli. 19.) It was particularly the wood of this tree which was used in the wilderness for making the tabernacle and its furniture. The wilderness of Arabia, in which the whole work was completed, furnishes no other tree at all suited for this use; while the acacia, or shittah, is so admirably fitted for it, by reason of its solid, beautiful and lasting character, that a better could scarcely have been found, if it could have been possible to make choice out of all the trees in the world. The moun

tains of Sinai and Horeb might still, as in ancient times, afford an abundant supply of the same timber for such a building.

It is far more difficult to determine what was the *Gopher-wood*, of which the ark was made. Some have imagined that cedar is to be understood under that name; others, that it was the timber of pine; another class conceive that the solid and almost imperishable wood of the cypress is so called; while a still different interpretation supposes that the word Gopher was not intended to signify any particular tree at all, but merely expresses some circumstance in the manner of its use in that building, as *squared* timbers, *planed* wood, or *pitched* wood, as we know the ark was daubed with pitch, within and without. From this confusion of opinions, it appears that nothing satisfactory can be known on this subject.

In Arabia, also, as well as in India, grew the *Cinnamon* tree, and the *Cassia*, that resembles the cinnamon so much; each yields a valuable spice, bearing its name to the most distant countries. There, also, the precious *Frankincense* seems to have been procured. It is a dry gum, of a yellowish white colour, and a strong, fragrant smell, with a warm and biting bitter taste, formed of the sap that flows from some tree which travellers have not yet been able to discover and describe. It takes fire easily, and burns with a bright and strong flame, sending upwards a heavy cloud of aromatic smoke. Every morning and evening, it was thus offered on the golden altar of the holy place, in the sanctuary, representing the prayers of saints, which rise as a most acceptable offering to God, when presented through the Great High Priest, Christ Jesus. (Ps. cxli. 2, Mal. i. 11.) It seems, however, to have signified *especially*, the merits of the Redeemer himself, which rise like grateful perfume with the prayers of his people, and dispose God graciously to hear and answer, and without which, no prayer of sinful man could ever be regarded by the HOLY ONE. (Luke i. 10, Rev. viii. 3, 4.) The *Myrrh*, repeatedly mentioned in Scripture, was another production of Arabia, procured, like the frankincense, from the trunk of some tree that flourishes in that spicy region. This precious gum has an extremely bitter taste, and a strong, though by no means disagreeable, smell. Among the ancients, it formed one article in the composition of the most costly ointments and was used by delicate persons as a perfume, either by scenting their clothes with it, or by carrying it in little caskets in their bosoms. Wine mingled with myrrh,—which Matthew calls *gall*, a word that means any thing exceedingly bitter,—was offered to our Saviour on the cross, to drink, because of its power to take away, in some mea-

sure, the sense of pain. Myrrh was much used for embalming the dead, and is mentioned as one of the articles brought by Nicodemus for this purpose, when he came to bury the body of Jesus

## CULTIVATED TREES.

Several trees were cultivated with care, on account of their fruit, and often became a source of no small profit to the husbandman. Of this class, was the *Olive*. It appears to have been cultivated very early; for we read of *oil* in the time of Jacob. (Gen. xxviii. 18.) This tree grows better in Palestine than in any other country of the east, where it is found. It flourishes with most advantage on land that is barren, mountainous, sandy and dry. Such a soil it finds on the hills just over against Jerusalem on the east, where, accordingly, it has been so common as to give name to the whole tract—the celebrated MOUNT OF OLIVES. The Olive is a handsome tree, with wide spreading branches, and leaves resembling those of the willow, which continue green all the year. Its trunk is



Olive Tree.

somewhat knotty, with smooth bark, and wood of a yellowish colour. It flourishes about two hundred years. The fruit, when it becomes ripe, is black, and pleasant to the taste; nearly all of it is thrown into the *oil-press*. The oil thus procured has always been highly esteemed. The olive has been the emblem

of *peace* among all nations ; perhaps, because an olive-branch, brought by the dove to Noah in the ark, was the first sign which he received of peace restored between Heaven and earth, after the bursting forth of God's awful wrath in the waters of the flood. It was also the symbol of prosperity of every kind. The oil likewise became the emblem of gladness and joy, and more especially of the cheering grace of the Holy Spirit. There are, also, *Wild-olives* in that country, of no value in themselves, but capable of being grafted into others. (Rom. xi. 17—24.)

The *Fig tree* delights also in dry and sandy soils. It grows, in the east, to a considerable size ; not rising altogether straight in its trunk, but often reaching a goodly height, and dividing itself into a great number of branches, well furnished with broad leaves, so as to form a very agreeable shade. It was customary,

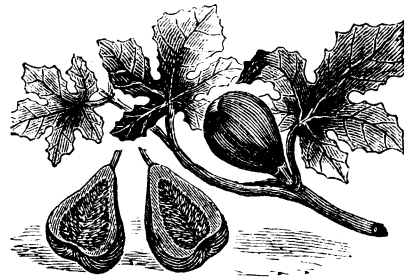


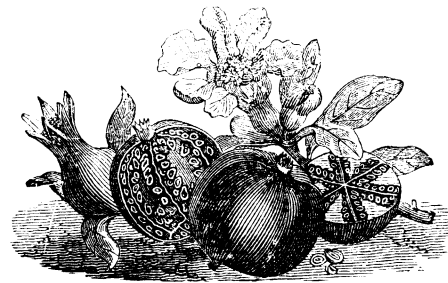
Fig Tree.

among the Jews, to rest themselves under its friendly covering (Mic. iv. 4.) Nathanael, it seems, was accustomed to find under the branches of such a tree, a retreat for solemn meditation and prayer. It was a retirement so completely concealed, probably in the midst of a thick cluster of other trees, that he was well persuaded no eye could see him there, except the all-exploring eye of God. (John i. 48—50.) The fruit of the fig tree makes its appearance before the leaves, growing from the trunk and large branches, and not from the smaller shoots, as the fruit of other trees usually does. There are three kinds, ripening at different seasons of the year. 1. The *First-ripe Fig*, which appears in the latter part of March, and becomes ripe toward the end of June ; this is the best sort. (Hos. ix. 10, Jer. xxiv. 2.) 2. The *Summer* or *Dry Fig*, which appears about the middle of June, and becomes ripe in August. 3. The *Winter Fig*, which appears in August, and does not ripen till about the end of November. All figs, when ripe, but especially

the *first-ripe* sort, fall of themselves. (Nahum iii. 12.) It is common to dry them in the sun, and preserve them in masses; these are called *cakes of figs*. (1 Sam. xxv. 18.) As fig trees begin to sprout toward the end of March, they became a sign of the approach of summer: "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." (Matt. xxiv. 32.)

The *Sycamore tree*, or *Sycamine*, as it is sometimes called, abounds especially in Egypt, but is also common in the low lands of Palestine. In size and figure, and in the appearance of its leaves, it bears much resemblance to the mulberry tree. Its fruit grows in clusters on little sprigs like grape-stalks, which shoot out directly from the trunk: it resembles the fig; on which account, the tree is sometimes styled the *Egyptian fig tree*. The body of the tree is very large, and it has numerous branches growing out from it, almost in a straight direction. On this account, it is particularly easy to be climbed. On one which stood by the road, Zaccheus climbed, to see the Lord. (Luke xix. 4.) It is always green. The wood, which is of a dark colour, will last a thousand years; on this account, it was much used in building. The fruit is so sweet as to be hurtful to the stomach, and therefore is not eaten, except by the poorer class, who have nothing better. Amos, the prophet, was employed in gathering sycamore fruit; a business that was pretty troublesome; for before it will get ripe, it must all be opened with the nail, or a piece of iron, to let out the milky juice; and this seems to have been his principal work. The tree yields fruit several times through the year, without regard to particular seasons.

The *Pomegranate* tree grows in almost all countries of the east. It does not rise high, and at a little distance from the ground shoots out into a multitude of branches, so as to appear like a large shrub. It bears large, handsome, reddish blossoms, shaped like bells. The fruit which these produce is very beautiful to the eye and pleasant to the taste. It is about the size of a large apple, perfectly round, encircled at the upper part with something resembling a crown, and covered with a rind which is thick and hard, but easily broken. The juice which it affords, is sometimes made into a kind of wine by itself, and sometimes mixed with other wine, to give it more sharpness: mention is made of the *spiced wine of the juice of the pomegranate*. (Song viii. 2.) Artificial pomegranates, made to resemble the natural ones, were esteemed, among the Jews, a considerable ornament; they were hung round the hem of the



Pomegranate Fruit.

high priest's robe, (Ex. xxviii. 33,) and on the net work which covered the tops of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, in the temple of Solomon, (1 Kings vii. 18.)



Pomegranate Tree.

*Orange* and *Lemon* trees are not common in Palestine; but they have been probably brought there from some more eastern country, in later times, as they are not mentioned in the Sacred Volume.

The *Apple tree* is mentioned with peculiar praise: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons; I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste," (Song ii. 3;) but the tree which we are accustomed to call by this name does not thrive well in the east, and bears only indifferent fruit; it is generally agreed, therefore, that the *apple tree* of the Scripture is the same as the *Citron tree*. This is a tree of noble appearance and great size, furnished with beautiful leaves through the whole year, and affording a most delightful shadow. The fruit is very sweet and pleasant, of the colour of gold, extremely fragrant, and proper to refresh such as are weary or faint. Words fitly spoken, Solomon tells us, are *like apples of gold* in pictures of silver. (Prov. xxv. 11.)

The *Palm tree* is not now often found in Palestine: the reason is, because it needs careful and skilful cultivation, which the state of that country has for a long time prevented. It is still very common in other regions of the east, and, as it appears from the Bible, once abounded in Judea. On ancient coins of the Jews, also, the figure of the palm tree is found sometimes stamped, often with a sheaf of wheat and a cluster of grapes, as a symbol of their nation. It rises perfectly straight to a very great height, without any limbs, except near its top, which is crowned with continual green. It grows most commonly in valleys and plains: the finest groves of it, anciently, were found in the neighbourhood of Jordan, especially in the plains of Jericho, which city was, on this account, sometimes called the *city of palm trees*. (Judg. iii. 13.) The palm tree produces dates, which grow in large clusters, and become ripe in August, September, and October. These are pleasant to eat, and are often preserved a long time in solid masses, after the juice has been forced out with a press. The juice makes the *date wine*. The palm is considered, by eastern people, to be the most noble and excellent of all trees; hence, a beautiful person is compared to it, (Song vii. 7,) and also a religious, upright man. (Ps. xcii. 12.) It seems to be



intended, in that beautiful image of the first Psalm: "He shall be like a tree *planted by the rivers of water*, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; *his leaf also shall not wither*." It was usual to scatter branches of palm in the way before kings, when they entered, on public occasions, into cities; it was, therefore, a mark of highest honour to the Saviour, when the people "took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him," (John xii. 13,) and strewed them before him, as he entered into Jerusalem. (Matt. xxi. 8.) In the Grecian games, those who conquered were rewarded, frequently, with a branch of palm: to this there is allusion in the vision of St. John: "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number—stood before the throne and the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and *palms in their hands*." (Rev. vii. 9.) This denotes victory over Satan and sin, crowned with the reward of eternal glory. The likeness of the palm tree was often carved in ornamental work.

The *Balsam* or *Balm tree* also grew formerly in Palestine, though, for want of culture, it is not found there now. It is still raised in some parts of Arabia and Egypt. There are three kinds of it; two growing like shrubs, the other a regular tree. The *balm*, mentioned in the Bible as an article of commerce and a valuable medicine, is made either of the sap of the tree, or of the juice of its fruit. Gardens of balm were, at a very early period, cultivated in the neighbourhood of Jericho and Engedi, and also in Gilead: the balm of Gilead was particularly esteemed. (Gen. xxxvii. 25, Jer. viii. 22.)

The *Almond tree* is the first to blossom in the opening year. It is covered with its snow-white flowers in the latter part of January, and before the end of March displays its ripe fruit. The rod of an almond tree, seen by Jeremiah in vision, denoted, from this circumstance, the rapid approach of God's threatened judgments: "Thou hast well seen; for I will hasten my word to perform it." (Jer. i. 12.)

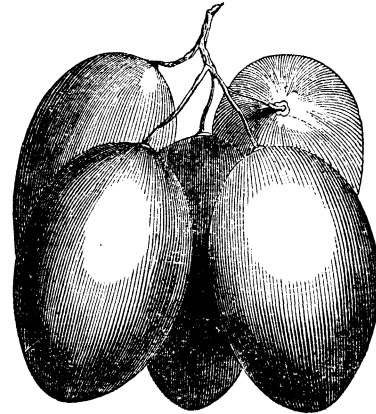
The *Vine* deserves especial mention. It was, no doubt, cultivated before the flood, as Noah, immediately after coming out of the ark, *planted a vineyard and drank of the wine*. The soil of Palestine was of the best sort for raising it; and hence it became a principal object of attention to the Jewish husbandman. In particular the mountains of Engedi and the valleys of Esheol and Sorek were celebrated for their grapes. These places were all in the territory which fell to the tribe of Judah. There seems to be an allusion to this advantage, in the blessing pronounced upon that tribe, prophetically, by the dying Jacob: "Binding his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice





Almond Tree.

vine, he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes." (Gen. xlix. 11.) The clusters of grapes grow, in that country, at the present day, to the weight of twelve pounds; in ancient times, no doubt, they were often larger. One of these great clusters, from the vale of Esheol, the spies brought to Moses, as a sample of the fruitfulness of the land, *bearing it between two, on a staff*, that its large grapes might not be bruised together. (Numb. xiii. 23, 24.) Some vines, in growing, ran along the ground; others grew upright of themselves, without any support; while a third sort needed a pole or frame, to assist them in rising, and to bear up their weight. Vineyards were generally planted upon the sides of hills and mountains, toward the south. The Palestine grapes are mostly red or black; whence the common expression, *the blood of grapes*. The vine was sometimes employed to make sceptres for kings. *To sit under a man's own vine and fig tree*, was a phrase signifying a state of prosperity and peace. (Mic. iv. 4.) Our Lord compares himself to a vine: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman. I am the vine; ye are the branches." (John xv. 1, 5.) As the trunk, planted and dressed by the husbandman's care, affords life and nourishment to



Palestine Grapes.

its branches, and enables them to bring forth clusters of grapes ; so is He the source of all spiritual life and strength and fruitfulness, to his people, appointed of God the Father, and sent forth into the world, that he might become such to every one that believeth on his name. The Jewish nation is also compared to a vine, and to a vineyard, to denote the kind care which it had received from God. (Ps. lxxx. 8, Is. v. 1.)

The *Vine of Sodom* grows in the neighbourhood of Jericho, not far from the Dead Sea. It produces grapes of a poisonous kind, bitter as gall. Moses compares the rebellious Israelites to this plant : "Their vine is the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah ; their grapes are grapes of gall, and their clusters are bitter." (Deut. xxxii. 32.)

## PLANTS.

Of *Plants* belonging to Palestine, there are mentioned in the Bible several of useful or agreeable character, and some of hurtful and unlovely sort. The *Lily* displays uncommon elegance in that country : "Solomon," we are told, "in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." (Matt. vi. 29.) Here, too, we may notice the *Rose*, though of a somewhat higher class. A great many kinds of it are found in the east ; some of them very remarkable for the richness and beauty of their flowers, and the delightful fragrance which they send forth. The rose of Sharon was particularly fine, in ancient days. (Song ii. 1.) The *Mund-rake* is a kind of melon, with pleasant smell and taste. The

*Mustard-plant* rises from the smallest seed into the likeness of a tree. (Matt. xiii. 32.) It presents a remarkable growth among *herbs*, in our own country; but in that region rises and spreads its branches to a much greater extent. The *Spikenard* is a much esteemed plant: only an inferior kind of it, however, is found in the region where Palestine lies; the true Spikenard, or Nard, belongs to India, in the more distant east. It grows in large tufts, rising upward like tall grass, and has a strong aromatic smell. An ointment of the most precious kind is made out of it, which anciently was exceedingly prized, and purchased with great expense in different countries. A box of it, containing a pound, was valued, in the time of our Saviour, at more than three hundred pence. So much Mary poured on his head, a short time before his death; *and the house was filled with the odour.* (John xii. 3.) The *Aloe* is a plant with broad prickly leaves, nearly two inches thick, which grows about two feet high. A very bitter gum is procured from it, used as a medicine, and anciently for the embalming of dead bodies. Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, to embalm the body of the Redeemer. (John xix. 39.) Besides this herb, however, which is found in eastern countries generally, there is a small tree, with beautiful flowers and most fragrant wood, that grows in India under the same name. The *Hyssop* is a small herb, growing on mountainous lands, with bushy stalks about a foot and a half high. The leaves of it have an aromatic smell, and a warm bitter taste. It is found abundantly on the hills near Jerusalem. *Cucumbers* and various kinds of *Melons* were cultivated among the Jews. Egypt, however, produces the finest melons. The *Water melon*, especially, is raised with great advantage, on the banks of the Nile, and furnishes a most agreeable refreshment in the warm climate of that country. Many poor people live on them almost entirely, while they last. The Israelites remembered them in the wilderness, as well as the *Leeks* and the *Onions*, with longing desire. (Numb. xi. 5.) Onions in Egypt are better than they are anywhere else in the world, being sweet and pleasant to the taste, without the hardness which commonly makes them unfit to be eaten. The *Thistle* and the *Nettle*, besides several kinds of thorns and brambles, were common in the fields of the Jewish farmer. He was also troubled with the *Tare*. This tare seems to have been the same weed that is now called *Darnel*, still known in that country, as well as in many others. It often gets among wheat and other grain, after the manner of cockle and other such hurtful plants. The bread made of grain in which much of its seed is found, is very unwholesome; it creates dizziness, drowsiness,

#### BIBLICAL ANTIQUITIES.

and headache. It is all-important, therefore, to separate it from the crop. This, however, cannot well be done while it is growing in the field; because its roots are so connected with those of the wheat, that to pluck up the one would materially injure the other. (Matt. xiii. 24—30.)

The different sorts of grain raised by the Jews, were, *Wheat*, which grows in almost every country; *Millet*, a coarse kind of grain, eaten by the poorer people; *Spelt*, *Barley*, *Beans*, *Lentils*, *Fitches*, *Anise* and *Cummin*. The two last were common small herbs: the Pharisees pretended to great religious scrupulosity, by carefully paying tithes of these and other little garden plants, such as *Mint* and *Rue*, while they neglected “the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” (Matt. xxiii. 23, Luke xi. 42.) *Flax*, also, and *Cotton*, were cultivated. Cotton grows in large pods, either on trees of considerable size, or on shrubs that spring up from the seed, and last only one year. The word *Corn*, in Scripture, is used as a general name for all sorts of grain. Rye and oats do not grow in countries where the climate is so warm: their place is supplied by barley.

From this general survey of its different productions, we may learn how extremely fruitful Palestine must have been, in the days of its ancient prosperity and peace. Every variety of soil had its use; some valuable tree or plant growing better upon it, than upon any other; so that the poorest and the roughest grounds yielded, oftentimes, as much as the fairest and most rich. While the different kinds of grain flourished on the more level and fertile tracts, plantations of the serviceable olive covered the barren and sandy hills; the low watery soils of clay nourished groves of the tall and beautiful palm; the steepest mountain sides were hung with the rich dark clusters of the vine. By the hand of industry, the naked rocks, on such steep places, were covered with earth, and walls were builded to hinder it from being swept away with the showers. So, from the bottom to the top, might sometimes be seen, rising one above another, plot after plot thus raised by labour and art, where the vine was reared by the husbandman's care, and rewarded his toil with its plentiful fruit. As every family had only a small piece of ground to till, every foot of it that could be improved was cultivated, and no pains were spared to turn it to its best account. Hence, the land had the appearance of a garden, and yielded support to a vast number of inhabitants. The country of Lower Galilee, especially, has been celebrated for its fruitfulness. According to the testimony of Josephus, the Jewish historian, who lived just after the time of Christ, that part of it which bordered on

the lake of Gennesareth, where our Lord spent so much of his time, was especially remarkable for the great variety and plenty of its productions; every plant seemed to thrive in it; fruits that naturally grow in different climates were raised with equal ease here; so that it seemed, says that writer, as if God had taken a peculiar delight in that region, and the seasons had rivalled each other in the richness of their gifts.

But when the traveller passes through Palestine now, his eye meets no such scenery of fruitfulness and beauty, over its mountains and plains. Large tracts of the country seem a barren waste; the rich covering of the field is gone, and the hills are stripped of the vine; a thinly scattered people live in comparative poverty and idleness, where once the many thousands of Israel and Judah found plentiful support. The country, for more than a thousand years, has been given up to be wasted by war and crushed by oppression. Its people have been driven away and trampled under foot, by cruel enemies. The whole land is now under the dominion of the Turks, who, instead of encouraging industry, leave it without protection and without profit. The farmer has no motive to plough and sow; his crops would grow up only to be plundered by wandering Arabs; and if he could secure any property, it would only expose him to danger from the avarice of some tyrant officer of the government, determined to seize it all for himself. No wonder, then, that "the fruitful land has been turned into barrenness." It has been done, however, "for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein," and is a wonderful fulfilment of the threatenings of God, delivered even as far back as the time of Moses, (Deut. xxix. 22—28,) and repeated by the prophets that followed after.

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## SECTION II.

### OF ANIMALS.

It would require a volume to describe the different sorts of insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, and beasts, that are found in Palestine. Many of them are found, also, in our own country, and have been known to us all our lives; but many others are peculiar to the east. We can only notice a few which are frequently mentioned in the Bible.

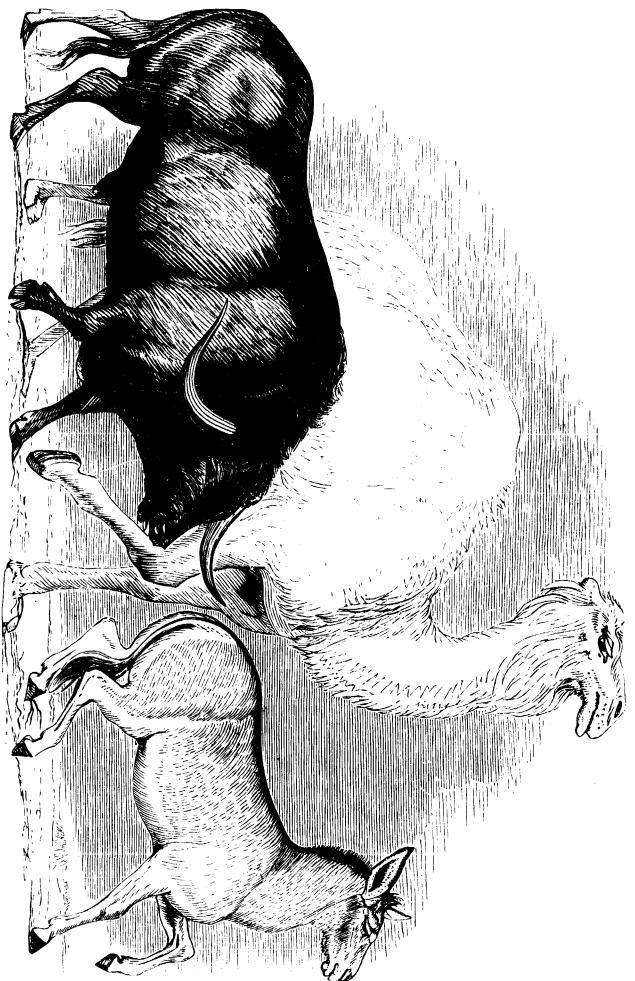
#### QUADRUPEDS.

*The Horse.* This useful animal is first mentioned in the history of Jacob and Joseph. It was, in their time, found in Egypt, and continued, long after, to be much used in that land

It seems to have lived at first, in its wild state in some part of Africa, and in the northern regions of Asia. The Jews made no use of horses before the time of Solomon; their country was too hilly for them to be of any service in war, and it was not usual then to use them as beasts of burden or labour in times of peace. Much use of them seems, indeed, to be discouraged in the law of Moses, as it is expressly forbidden for any future king *to multiply horses*. (Deut. xvii. 16.) Joshua also was commanded of God, when he took horses in war, to cut their hamstrings; and the same thing was long after done by David. This was the quickest way of rendering them useless for time to come, as it completely disabled them at once, and soon caused them to die. Solomon carried on a great trade in horses; they were brought in great numbers, in his day, from Egypt. After his time, they were never uncommon in the country. The rider, in those times, had no saddle, but sat merely upon a piece of cloth.

The *Ox*. Cattle of the ox kind are smaller in eastern countries than with us, and have something of a lump on the back, just over the fore-feet. The finest kind were raised in the rich pastures of Bashan, where they became very fat and strong, and sometimes exceedingly fierce. These animals were highly esteemed among the Jews for their usefulness, and seem to have held pretty much the same rank of importance with the farmer that the horse has among us. Bulls and cows were both used to the yoke, and employed to draw the cart and the plough, and tread out the grain when it was gathered to the threshing-floor. A particular law was made by God, that the ox should not be muzzled, or have his mouth bound, when he was engaged in this last employment. (Deut. xxv. 4, 1 Cor. ix. 9, 1 Tim. v. 18.) Besides the *labour* of the animal, however, the cow was valued, as with us, for her milk, which was either drunk in its simple state, or made into cheese of various kinds. Horns are frequently used in the Bible as the sign of strength and power: to have *the horn exalted*, denotes prosperity and triumph, (Ps. lxxxix. 17, 24;) to have it *cut off*, signifies the loss of power. "All the horns of the wicked," says David, "will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted." (Ps. lxxv. 10.) To *lift up the horn*, is to act proudly. Christ is called *a horn of salvation*, because he is *mighty* to redeem to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. (Luke i. 69.)

The *Ass*. In the east, this animal has nothing of the mean character that belongs to it in our country. Asses, there, are not only fit for hard labour, but are, at the same time, active and beautiful in appearance. In early times, they made a large



Ox, Camel and Ass of Syria.