

times marble ceiling. One such chamber which I visited in Damascus is said to have cost not less than £3,000.

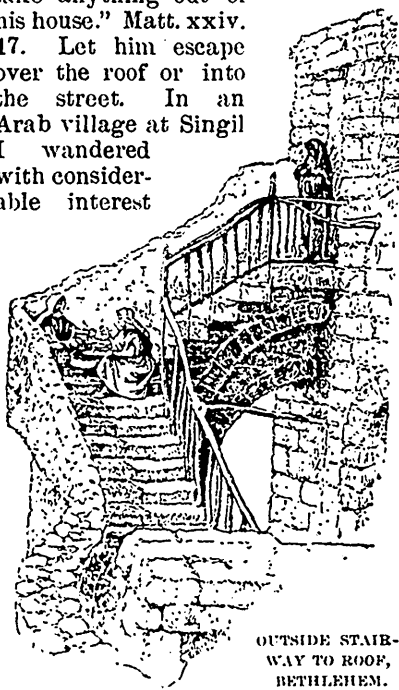
The flat roof of the house is surrounded by a parapet or low breast-work to prevent the inmates from falling into the street, or a higher one of lattice work to screen the women of the household from the curious gaze of their neighbours. See Deut. xxii. 8: "When thou buildest a new house, then shalt thou make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any man fall from thence." It was from such a flat roof that the piece of millstone was cast out on the head of Abimelech "and all to break his skull."

The flat roof is a favourite place for the cultivation of flowers. At the so-called "American House" in Jerusalem, the highest in the city, is a charming roof-garden, and the outlook over Kedron and Olivet is grand in the extreme.

The roof is convenient for many operations, as for drying fruit, vegetables and flax. Rahab covered the spies with the stalks of flax which she had laid in order upon the roof. Joshua ii. 6. The housetop is a favourite place for prayer, as it is usually the most isolated and quiet spot in the house. This fact gives point to the proverb, "It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house." It was while praying on the housetop at Joppa that Peter saw the vision of the heaven opened and received the revelation that to the Gentiles, too, the grace of God had come. On the roof of that traditional house we read the narrative of that marvellous vision. Here, too, mourning was made on the occurrence of death in the dwelling as described by Isaiah: "On the tops of their houses and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly." Isaiah xv. 3. Here, also, proclamation was

often made or address to the people. Hence the force of Matthew x. 27, "What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops," and "That which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Luke xii. 3.

The staircase to the roof generally leads up from the open court, or sometimes from the street. Hence the admonition. "Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house." Matt. xxiv. 17. Let him escape over the roof or into the street. In an Arab village at Singil I wandered with considerable interest



OUTSIDE STAIR-
WAY TO ROOF,
BETHLEHEM.

over a good part of the hamlet on the flat roofs of the houses.

The "chamber on the wall," which the Shunamite induced her husband to build for the prophet Elisha was, doubtless, accessible from this outer staircase, as was also the chamber of the prophet Elijah when he abode with the woman of Zarephath, and also the upper chamber of the house of Dorcas. It was doubtless to a chamber like this that Nicodemus came to our Lord by night. These rooms were sometimes the largest