

But the roof is one of the most important parts of an eastern house. We ascend to it by a flight of steps, as already mentioned, which are entirely unconnected with the interior of the house. It is made nearly flat, allowing only sufficient elevation to carry off the water, and is surrounded by a parapet, battlement, or balustrade, lest one should heedlessly or unwittingly fall from it. This was a matter of divine command. A wall on the roof designates the limits of contiguous houses, but it is so low, that a whole range of buildings, and even a street, may be passed over without coming down. The roof is covered with a kind of cement, which hardens by exposure to weather, and forms a clean, smooth, and very agreeable floor or terrace. Sometimes clay, or earth of some kind, sufficient for vegetation, was used, and hence the frequent allusion to grass upon the housetops; and sometimes tiles or broad bricks were used. The roof was a place of repose, and of resort. It was also used for drying linen and flax. Sometimes a tent was spread to protect the sleeper from the cold and damp of the night. It was a place of conference and worship.

Chimneys were probably unknown, though the word occurs, Hos. xiii. 3. What we call chimneys were not invented till the fourteenth century. The smoke of ancient houses escaped through apertures in the wall.

The *hearth* was a furnace or portable furnace, such as is still used in eastern countries.

The materials for building were abundant. Stone and brick, and the best species of timber, for the strong and heavy as well as the light and ornamental work, were easily obtained. Hewn stone was often used, and marble of the richest vein and polish. Cedar was used for wainscots and ceilings, which were of carved panel-work, with mouldings of gold, silver, or ivory. Perhaps the profusion of ivory in them may account for the expressions, 1 Kings xxiii. 39. Ps. xlv. 8. Amos iii. 15.

Many eastern houses are built with mud walls, reeds, and rushes, and sometimes only stakes plastered with clay. Hence they were very insecure, and afforded a place for serpents and vermin. Such a house, built even on a rock above the reach of the periodical torrents of rain, is strikingly emblematical of weakness, fragility, and decay, but when placed on the sand, and exposed on every side to the rain, and wind, and floods, the folly of the builder is almost incredible.

In addition to what we have before said in treating of the *oleah*, it may be remarked that the winter and summer houses or *parlours* were constructed with particular reference to the season. The summer houses were built partly under ground, and paved with marble. The fountains which gush out in their courts, and the various contrivances to exclude heat and secure a current of fresh air, render them exceedingly refreshing amid the torrid heats of summer. The winter houses might have had accommodations corresponding to the season.

We are told that it was customary among the Hebrews to dedicate the house when it was finished and ready to be inhabited. The event was celebrated with joy, and the divine blessing and protection implored.—*Bible Dictionary*.

ONLY ONE BRICK ON ANOTHER.

Edwin was looking at a large building which they were putting up, just opposite to his father's house. He watched the workmen from day to day, as they carried up the bricks and mortar, and then placed them in their proper order.

His father said to him; "my son, you seem to be very much taken up with the bricklayers, pray what might you be thinking about? Have you any notion of learning the trade?"

"No sir," said Edwin, smiling; "but I was just thinking what a little thing a brick is, and yet that great house is built by laying one brick on another."