

A Sermon on Houses

such a well-worn subject. We know from tradition that the stone or earth floors were strewn with rushes, that the walls often boasted tapestry, and that the tables and benches were simple in fashion. Carpets, like most other luxuries and refinements, came from the East, and they are mentioned in the Bible as used by persons "who dwell in tents." The Romans set great store by Babylonian carpets, and it is known that, even at this late date, towns bordering on the site of Babylon and Nineveh are remarkable for the beauty of their carpets. Wall-papers were also Eastern products, and came first from China and Japan. The oldest papers handed down to us are most beautiful in colouring and design; the ground being invariably white or cream, and the pattern large, with conventionalised birds and flowers. The fashion of hanging walls with silk was too costly a one to find general acceptance.