

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE.

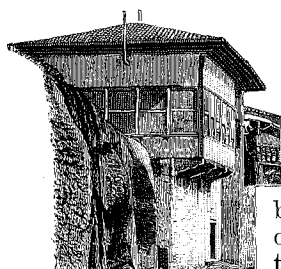
VOL. IV.

SEPTEMBER, 1888.

No. 3.

SCENES IN CYPRUS.

By W. H. Mallock.



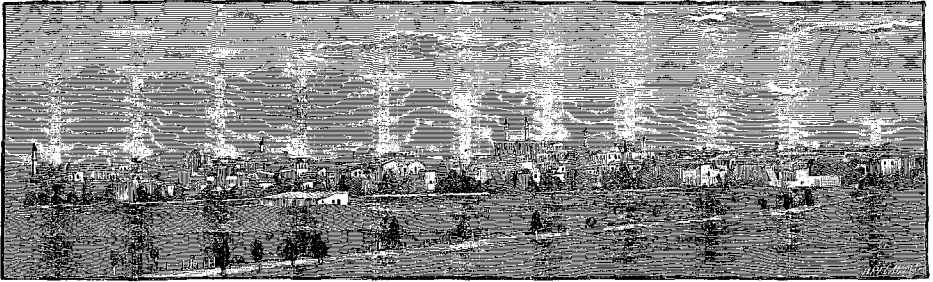
CYPRUS is a country which in my early youth always excited my curiosity and imagination; and several years before the British occupation was thought of, I had, being then an undergraduate at Oxford, entertained a project of spending one of my vacations there. That project, however, eventually came to nothing; and it had long ceased to occupy a place even among my fancies when it was revived last autumn in a very unromantic way. I was given to believe that there was certain property in the island which might possibly prove a profitable investment; and I started at Christmas for the region of my forgotten dreams, with the dull, practical object of ascertaining if this were so. I calculated that a fortnight's visit would be amply sufficient for what I wanted; and as I intended to finish the winter in Italy, was looking forward, during the first part of my journey, less to the visit itself than to the day when I should be able to end it.

Gradually, however, as I drifted southward and eastward, as I left behind me the squalid skies of England, the snows that down to Brindisi made Italy hideous, and the deluge of gray rain that obscured and chilled Alexandria; as the air grew clearer, the breeze warmer, and at last the blue dome opened and ex-

panded over me; as the British tourist utterly disappeared—for the time of tourists in Syria was not yet; as the deck of the steamer, which, touching first at Jaffa, was presently from Beyrout to take me across to Larnaka, showed me nothing but veiled or turbaned figures, some crouching in prayer, others babbling unintelligibly; as waking one morning I saw that a mile away from me were the brown sands and the tufted palms of Palestine, and inland the violet lines of the hills about Jerusalem;—as I underwent this gradual change of experience, a corresponding change took place in the color of my own expectations. Something began to stir in me of my former sentiment and curiosity; and I found myself once more looking forward to my destination as a land of romance and wonder rather than of profitable investments. Nor was this change transient: on my arrival it developed and completed itself. With regard to investments, I made all inquiries that were necessary—with what result it is needless here to mention; but having made these, and indeed whilst I was making them, the imaginative interest of the scenes and the life surrounding me threw more and more the material interests into the background, and made me feel, like Saul and like Wilhelm Meister, that having gone out to seek for my father's asses I had found a kingdom.

Many books have been written about Cyprus, historical, archaeological, statistical, political, and scientific; and some of

Copyright, 1888, by Charles Scribner's Sons. All rights reserved.



General View of Nicosia.

them are full of accurate and valuable information : but in no single one is there any adequate tribute to its general charm and fascination, or apart from its specialized interests. A distinguished savant, whom I met there engaged in excavating, and who grubbed for his antiquities as eagerly as a pig for truffles, let fall in my hearing that he was daily longing for the time when the tale of his treasures should be completed, and he might quit the soil which yielded them. There is a specimen of the temper in which Cyprus has been studied and visited ! What wonder then that it has never had justice done to it ? Countries are like women. Any careful observer may take stock of their ornaments, worm out their history, and even arrive at the amount of their debts and income ; but those only can do them justice in some ways who, in addition to observing them, end by falling in love with them. This process, equally delightful and unexpected, I myself underwent with reference to Cyprus ; and I gradually began to contemplate a short book about it, in which the wrongs done to its beauty might be atoned for. Meanwhile I am glad to have an opportunity of describing a few of its chief scenes and characteristics, especially as it gives me the privilege of committing some photographs taken by me to the permanent keeping of the unrivalled wood engraving of America.

Cyprus is, in some ways, unique among historical countries, not indeed in the antiquity of its earliest civilization, though even in this point it yields only to Egypt, but in the strange variety of races, of rulers, of religions, and famous

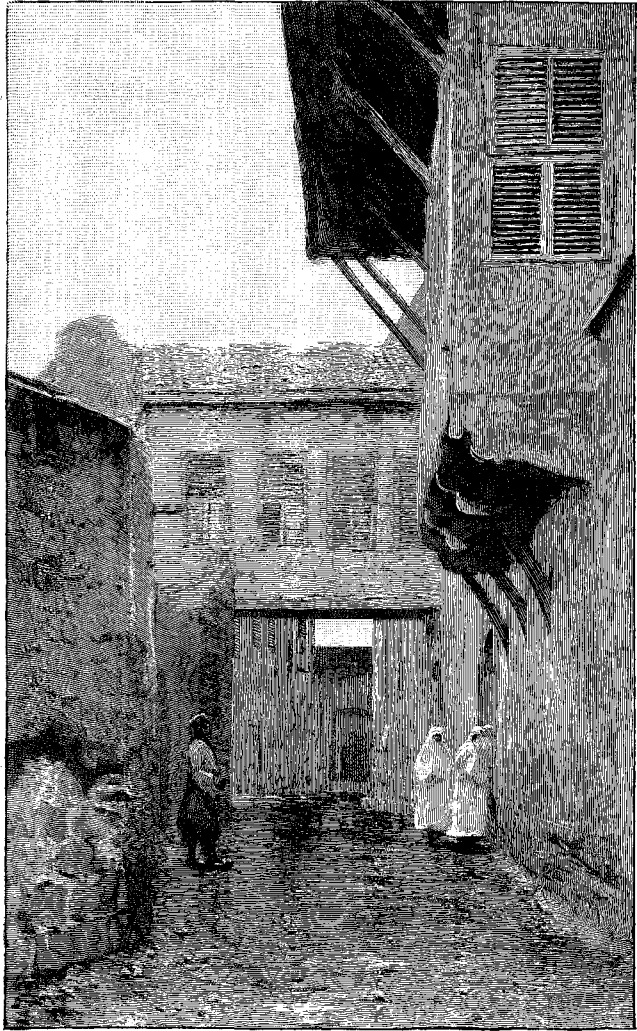
names, which have made or colored its past, which its own name still calls back to us, and whose influences still linger in its aspect and in its life to-day. Egypt and Tyre, Greece, Rome, and Byzantium, feudal England, Jerusalem, feudal France, Genoa, Venice, and Stamboul—the mere recital of the empires and powers connected with it comes to the ear like a passage out of *Paradise Lost*. Other names, too, it claims, which are even more suggestive—Aphrodite and Adonis, who met on its sleeping hillsides, Balaam and Ezekiel who sang of its power and riches, Solomon, Solon, and Alexander, St. Paul, St. George, Richard Cœur de Lion of England—again, Othello and Desdemona, the Sultans Selim and Mustapha—time would fail to fill in half the catalogue, or do more than allude to the pageant of images evoked by it. Further it must be added that this land of unnumbered memories has been also a world's proverb for its own unrivalled loveliness, for its groves and fountains, for its plains of fabulous fertility, and the magic of its enchanting air.

So many interests almost confuse the imagination ; but the interest which, if not the greatest, is at least the most peculiar is to be found in its history during the Middle Ages. In Cyprus it was that with the most enduring results the armed chivalry of the West wedded the luxury of the East, and gave birth to an entirely strange civilization. The Gothic doorway, native to France and England, and crowned with the very shields peculiar to Western heraldry, there gave access not to the stern courtyard, but to gardens of palms and oranges, and murmuring marble fountains. The

towns were thronged with nobles as well as burghers; the narrow streets were bright with the movement of gorgeous retinues; the markets were filled with rare and costly delicacies, with choice wines, with ice in the heats of summer, and with fish and game from a distance; in the merchants' shops were jewels, unrivalled in the world. Castles assumed the aspect of country houses, embowered in verdure and watered by long drawn aqueducts; or even where, perched on some lonely mountain pinnacles, they still retained the air and the reality of fortresses, the courts were filled with a pomp of slaves and camels, and silken hangings flickered at the carved windows. And what is Cyprus now? What traces are left in it of all this storied past? And how does it justify the old renown of its beauty?

I will speak of the last point first—of the character and disposition of its scenery. Oblong in shape, the island may be said, roughly speaking, to consist of an immense plain which runs lengthways through the middle of it and is bounded on the north by a continuous range of mountains, and on the southwest by an entire mountainous district. In former ages mountain and plain alike were covered with luxuriant vegetation. Forests of pines and processions of spire-like cypresses climbed literally into the clouds; while the level roads below wandered through one great garden, by lines of poplars, olive groves, and clusters of date palms. This is no fancy picture: what has been is at once

evident. But the Cyprus of to-day is greatly changed from this. For centuries and centuries the axe has been at work upon its timber; and its forests



Street Scene in Nicosia.

in most places have now utterly disappeared. Not only is this an incalculable loss in itself; there has in consequence of it been a great diminution in the rainfall. The extraordinary qualities still possessed by the soil, far and wide, are imprisoned in it simply for want of water; and the lower lands like the mountains have been comparatively treeless.

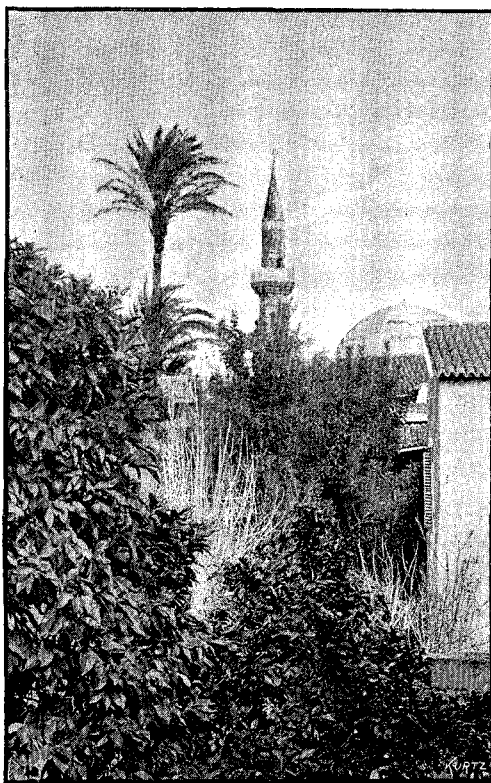
But though the ruthless improvidence

of man has accomplished this metamorphosis, nature here has refused to suffer disfigurement. She has been stripped of one set of beauties only to reveal others, and even of the old beauties she has by no means lost all. There are districts even now where the forests still survive; there are valleys tremulous with acacia trees, and gorges thronged with oleanders. Whenever on the plain a stream of water is constant, the ground surrounding it shows as a blot of the deepest green; the dwellings sure to be near it are all embowered in branches; and a towering sycamore will be seen standing over it serene like a sentinel. But there, it is true, are exceptions; let me speak of the landscape in general. The mountains denuded of their foliage have been clothed by the sun and air with a living garment of constantly changing colors, which sometimes hides their loss, sometimes more than atones for it. The plains, in spite of a certain general bareness, are checkered with tracts of asphodel, and in February glitter with wildflowers. But here, as on the mountains, it is the air which is the great enchantress. It is fresh as the moving sea; it is clear as crystal; in a special and emphatic sense it must be described as liquid. It brightens and softens what it touches, just as water does; rocks and plants seen in it are like the rocks and plants in an aquarium. In the distances, mirage and bars of violet mist are constantly floating in it, low over the level land, so that the

land seems to mix with them and melt into something sea-like. I have felt the charm of the air in many places, but nowhere a charm equal to what it holds in Cyprus.

A general idea of the aspect of the barer scenery may be easily conveyed

to anyone who is acquainted with the Scotch Highlands. Standing on one of the elevations which are to be found in the plains about Nicosia, and looking round one at the wide encircling panorama, one might for a moment fancy one's self in parts of Sutherland or Inverness-shire. But then, such a fancy would inevitably, as it was in my own case, be succeeded by a sense of difference. It would be seen that everything was on a more extended scale, that the crests of the mountains were more various and fantastic, the levels immeasurably



Scene in Nicosia. From a window overlooking an old garden.

vaster, and the tints more gorgeous. The long ranges would reach away into the distance in undulating lines, ultramarine and rose color, while here and there a summit would glitter like frosted silver. And then another peculiar feature would be noticed—enormous isolated rocks, with steep sides and entirely flat tops, rising far off out of the dead level, like so many huge fortresses: and these, if the day were declining, would seem to be half transparent, as if, with all their scars, they were cut out of solid amethyst, and might almost pass for the beauties of the New Jerusalem. Meanwhile the breeze would be breathing with a suavity alien to northern regions;

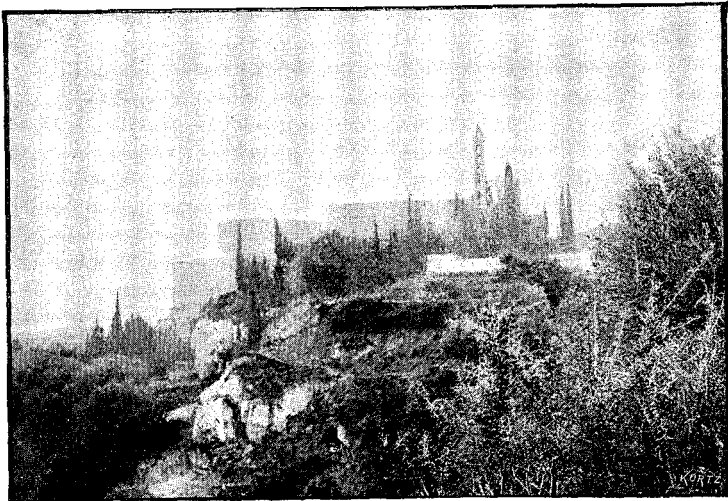
even if it freshened it would touch the cheek like a caress; and a soothing southern softness would be felt to pervade everything. Farther strange impressions also would not be wanting. Over the ground below, which had just been suggesting a grouse moor, gillies, shooting lodges, kilts, whiskey, and bagpipes, there would suddenly be discovered moving a long caravan of camels—in other quarters

parties of white veiled women, and travelling groups curiously like the Flight into Egypt—so many pictures that might have stepped out of a family Bible. A new sentiment is thus borne into the landscape, and the consciousness of the East mixes itself with a consciousness of the South.

It is true that in making these last remarks I am straying from the consideration of mere natural scenery, and beginning to enter the region of human interests. But indeed the scenery itself, as it affects the mind, cannot be understood apart from these; and what I have just said about air and plain and mountain will acquire a clearer meaning when I have given a few pictures of the life that is connected with them to-day, and the traces of the life that has been.

Speaking, however, of what has been, it will be well to say at once, that of classical and preclassical times though innumerable traces remain, very few are above ground or affect the aspect of the surroundings. For the traveller, as distinct from the student, Phœnicia has left next to nothing; and what Greece and Rome have left consists principally of traditions and memories, and certain most singular customs and beliefs among the people. The case is very different when we come to a period a little later.

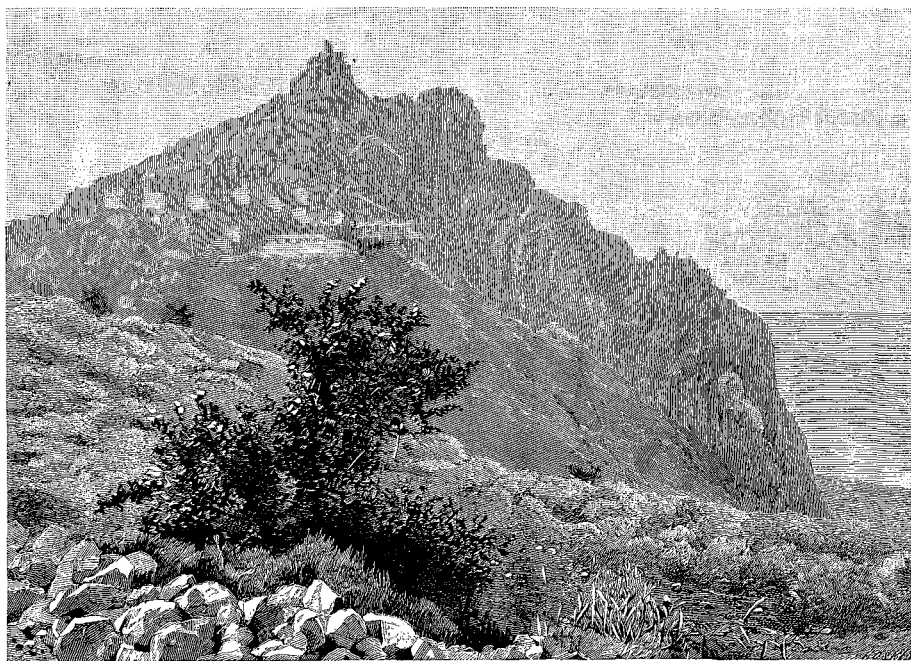
One of the first objects visible as Larnaka is approached from the sea is a



General View of the Abbey of Bella Pais.

mountain crowned by a monastery that was founded by the mother of Constantine, and whose chapel every year is still crowded with pilgrims. Indeed from the times of the Empress Helena onwards, every age has left buildings, which yet exist, behind it: and some of these not only recall the past, but are also parts of the actual life of the present.

The completest illustration of this is to be found in the city of Nicosia, which of all towns in the world is perhaps the most composite in its character, and surprises the mind with the strangest medley of impressions. We just now imagined ourselves to be standing not far from it, surveying the plain in which it lies, and the mountains which stretch along its horizons. From the same sort of position let us now look at it itself. What we see is a girdle of walls, enclosing flat roofed houses, above which rise a forest of palms and minarets, with here and there a dome like a white soap-bubble; and in the middle of all there is one enormous structure which looms over all the others, as if only knee deep in them. The spectacle is entirely oriental; it has often been compared to Damascus: indeed the picture of Damascus in Baedeker's Guide to Syria might almost do duty as a picture of Nicosia.



General View of the Castle of St. Hilarion.

But when we come to examine this alien looking place more nearly, facts reveal themselves of the most incongruous kind. The walls that enclose it were built by the Republic of Venice; the great structure in the middle of it is a mediæval Gothic cathedral; and the palace, dating from the days of Byzantine dukes, altered and occupied by a line of crusading kings, and eventually submitting to receive the lion of St. Mark above its gateway, contained till yesterday the offices of the Turkish government. These particular points would be apprehended in an afternoon's ramble; but there are others, even more curious, of which one only grows aware gradually, and after days of exploration. They are not the less interesting because they come upon him one by one.

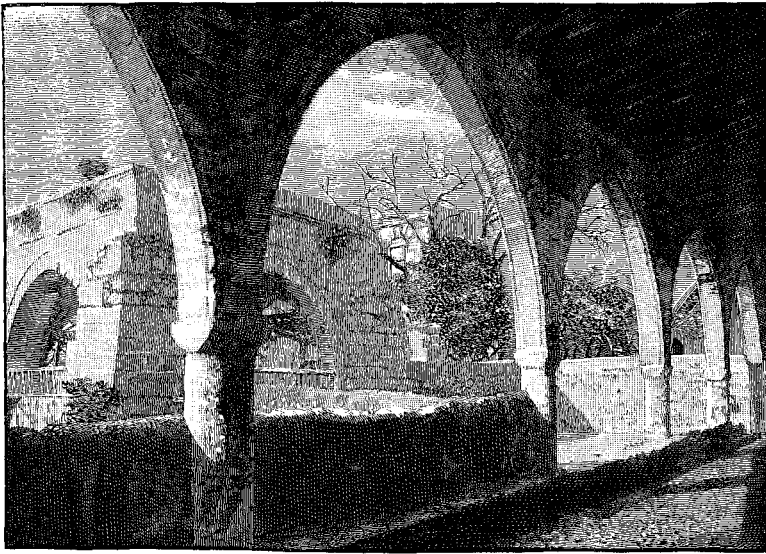
In shape the town is very nearly a circle, something over a mile in diameter; and its plan is as intricate a maze as an old French garden. The houses, which rarely have more than two stories, are mostly built of wood, resting on stone foundations; and their prevailing color is a monotonous dusty brown. Except in the quarter of the bazaars, there are

no shops or places of business; and everywhere else in the streets there is an almost cloistral quiet. Near the ground hardly any windows are visible; and the blind wall is only broken by doors at considerable intervals. Above, there is more variety. There are windows there in plenty, many of them projecting, hanging over the head of the passenger, and protected with quaint lattice work; while the roofs on either side, which project still farther, sometimes nearly touch each other. In many places, however, there are no houses at all—nothing but reaches of wall, from ten to fifteen feet in height.

The description thus far may not sound very attractive; but these streets in reality are full of fascination. They have innumerable turns and windings, which amuse and perplex the wanderer; and for days, even for weeks, they seem to him to be themselves innumerable. Wheeled vehicles rarely pass along them, nor are they ever crowded in any way; but isolated groups and figures glide to and fro continually. An old Turk, with a turban and flowing robe, goes slowly by, seemingly in deep meditation; a

brisk Armenian passes him, in a fez and a black frock coat ; while a bronzed shepherd, with a shaggy capote upon his shoulders, casting a wild, half civilized glance at both of them, brings a breath with him of the open plains and mountains. These disappear down side alleys or into doorways, and their place is taken by a new set of apparitions—a Greek priest surrounded by a group of neophytes, a slow camel with its attendant, a small cavalcade of mules, meeting or succeeding one another at leisurely intervals ; while more frequent than any of these are the muffled forms of women, some a ghostly white, some purple and scarlet, showing above their veils glimpses of their dark eyes. Watching all this, one is constantly reminded of the Arabian Nights. Nor are other things wanting to stimulate the imagi-

bazaars, which are a labyrinth in themselves. The change is singular. The throng and the bustle in which one finds one's self is as remarkable as the quiet one has left : and the elements of the scene are even more picturesque and various. The buildings are of one story only. The streets are nearly all of them covered, some by arches, some by battered awnings, some by a trellis-work of vines ; and the light that filters in from the luminous sky above is subdued and brown, like an interior of Teniers or Van Ostade. Certain of the shops are little more than booths ; but most of them are of stone with roofs of pointed vaulting, so that they look like a series of chapels with an end wall wanting. Other oriental bazaars—that of Cairo, for instance, or even Beyrout, are incomparably richer and more interesting

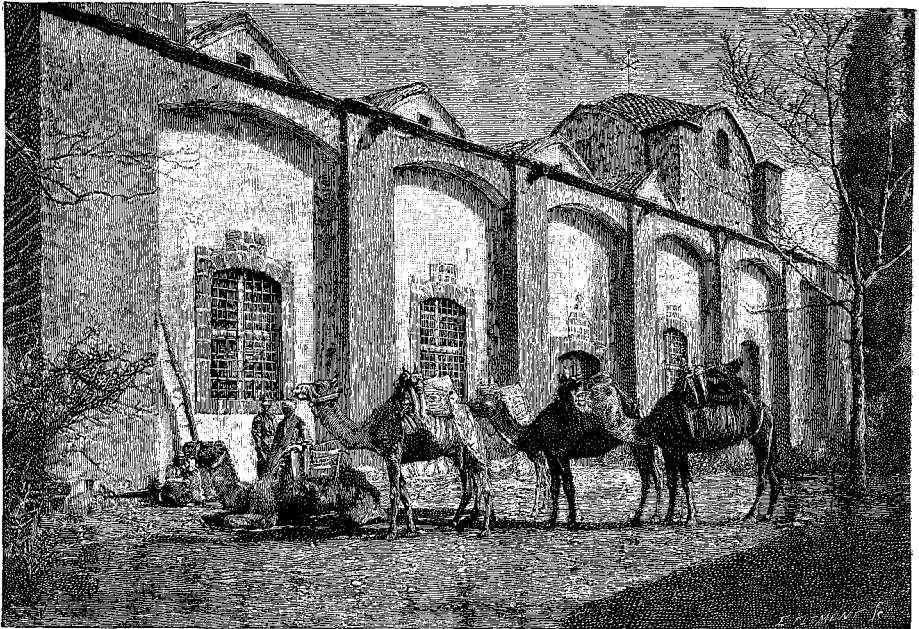


The Cloisters—Abbey of Bella Pais.

nation. The doors in the blind walls, often half open, reveal visions of pillars, arcades, and gardens—a mysterious world of green and shadow and sunlight ; and the lower walls themselves allow one to see occasionally the feathery fronds of palms, or boughs laden with oranges.

Threading one's way through this world of hush and mystery one arrives at last at the nucleus of the labyrinth—the

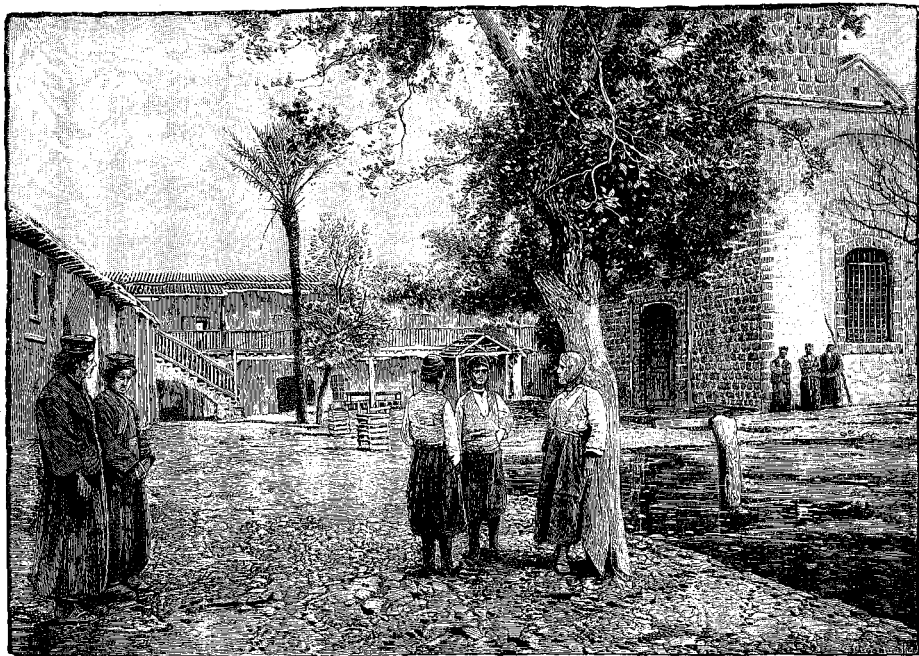
in the wares offered for sale in them : but not Cairo itself, as a picture of unfamiliar life, and a curious survival of the past, is equal to this bazaar of Nicosia. There is hardly a spot in it which would not be a study for an artist ; and every time I wended through it I felt I had been passing through a gallery of Dutch pictures. In one quarter one passes a row of silversmiths each at work at the door of his open cell, with



Court-yard of a Greek Monastery.

a grimy box before him, containing his stock in trade. Then turning a corner one looks down the street of drapers, fluttering with handkerchiefs, scarves, and brilliant stuffs, as if it were hung with flags, the shops being caverns of shadow filled with half-seen bales. Before some of them are small raised platforms, which project a little into the roadway. On one of these a Nubian is quilting a stuffed coverlet, lying almost flat as he does so. On another an old Turk is squatting, superbly calm ; and, as if customers had no existence for him, quietly sucks at the amber mouthpiece of his chibouk, or stretches his hands over a brazier of live charcoal. Farther on come glimpses of small shops of the barbers, as bare to the public eye as the rooms in a doll's house, then of cafés, with just as little privacy, where groups of men carousing at long tables are dimly visible under the obscurity of swarthy arches. A moment later we catch sight of an inky alley, which shows us the moving hands of a long succession of shoemakers. Another turn, and we are in the middle of fruits, vegetables, and groceries. Trays are on each side of us laden with oriental sweetmeats ; behind them are huge oil jars

and bulbous cheeses, like turnips ; everywhere are dangling bunches of yellow candles, ready for burning at shrines, tombs, or altars ; and often we came to a whole space made brilliant with pyramids of pale lemons, or wax-colored stacks of radishes. Again another turn, and we are in the smoke-blackened street of the iron workers, with forges far in the darkness, fizzing and spluttering fitfully : and at the end of this very likely we are back again at the point from which we started. And through all these streets, from morning till evening, the most motley throng keeps moving. Dark European costumes push and jostle their way amongst flowing robes of every imaginable color ; and the faces are of every shade from white to the glossiest ebony. Turbans, felt hats, yashmaks, and fez caps, pass and repass each other, till one becomes dizzy in watching them. Above them are seen moving tall earthenware pots, poised on undistinguishable heads, or a way is forced by a big plank-like tray, on which a baker carries a row of rolls ; while from time to time there is a sudden crush and movement, as a bullock cart advances slowly, with the animals' huge horns swaying.



In the Court of a Greek Monastery near Nicosia.

Let us quit this scene, and pass down a quiet street that leads from it. Turning a corner we suddenly find before us a narrow alley spanned by a succession of arches. We look up, and we suddenly find that they are neither more nor less than the flying buttresses of the cathedral. We have travelled 2,000 miles. The cathedral, it is true, is now used as a mosque, and in place of the original tower there are now two minarets: but the building still has its old Christian air about it, and it fills its precinct with suggestions of a quiet English town. Nor is the cathedral alone in doing this. Almost touching it is another mediæval church—a mass of exquisite carving; on the opposite side of a square is an old brown building that was once an archbishop's palace; and in every direction are western coats of arms, one of which I recognized as that of an extinct Devonshire family. I used always to expect every moment in this neighborhood to see a curate coming round the corner: but instead of a curate, the only black thing visible was a naked Soudanese fanatic who passed among the Mahometans for a saint, and who, I was told, would probably break

my camera, if ever he saw it directed toward the temple of Allah.

And now, with eyes grown more accustomed to such surroundings, let us go back to the hush of the other quarters—to the shadowy labyrinthine ways. We shall presently begin to discover many things which at first we had never noticed. We shall see that the lower stone work on which the mud superstructures rest is in many places ancient and beautifully pointed masonry, with here and there in it signs of a walled up crusader or fragments of broken moulding. We shall see that the doors one after another are arches of pointed Gothic; and their crumbling coats of arms are still surmounting some of them; and we shall gradually realize that these mysterious houses round us all stand on the foundations of mediæval Christian palaces. Inwardly, however, we shall notice Christian emblems or walls whose character is at once felt to be different; and here or still lower we are looking at the church of the Armenians; here at a Greek Basilica; or here into the long cloisters of a Greek or Maronite monastery.

Having strayed through the streets, let us now penetrate into the interiors. The houses are, roughly speaking, all of the same pattern. They are built round two, or sometimes three, sides of a garden, with open arcades from which the rooms are entered. The staircases sometimes rise through the inner parts of the building, sometimes in arches in the open air; and they terminate sometimes in a corridor with glazed windows, sometimes in a second arcade, or in a deep loggia. As a rule the wood work is rude, and the ceilings, unplastered, exhibit a row of rafters, backed by a kind

er considerable areas. One in which I spent several weeks, and which in comparative size was moderate—even small, had a frontage to the street of a hundred feet, and a depth of two hundred; while one, half in ruins, which I had to explore continually, must have enclosed within its walls something far more than an acre. Nothing can be imagined richer in quaint views than the garden thus secured, with the polished sky showing cloudless overhead, and a tall tower or minaret peering over the walls from a distance. I have said that the classical times have left little behind



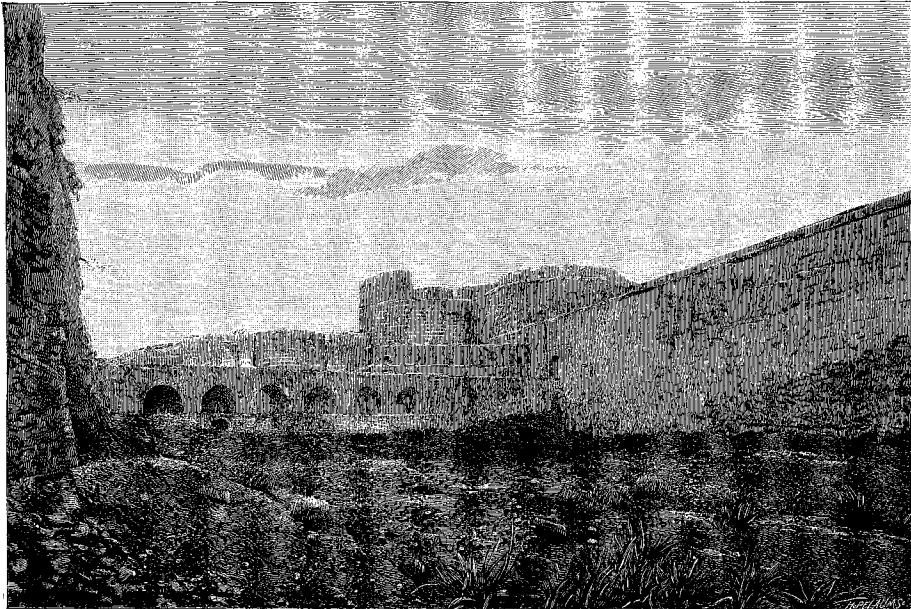
Walls and Harbor of Famagosta.

of matting. Here and there, indeed, is a house where every lintel and door is carved, and the ceilings are arabesques of color; these, however, are exceptions. But the rooms are always numerous, large, and lofty; and they are constantly broken by graceful arches, which in the scarcity of good timber, help to support the roof. The arches, too, which surround the gardens, high, slim, and pointed, are a really beautiful feature, and stamp the scene with a peculiar architectural character. These houses cov-

them that was above ground; but they have left something. Here in these gardens, amongst the green gloom of the orange-trees, are fountains built out of blocks of antique carved marble; violets will be growing round a white Corinthian capital; or stuck into the ground as a careless border for a flower-bed will be a broken slab with the letters on it of an Hellenic inscription; and thus through all the later ages of history comes a faint echo from a past that is beyond the past.

And here, having mentioned history, let me recall, in the briefest manner, the main events which, since the classical times, have constituted the history of Cyprus, and have embodied themselves

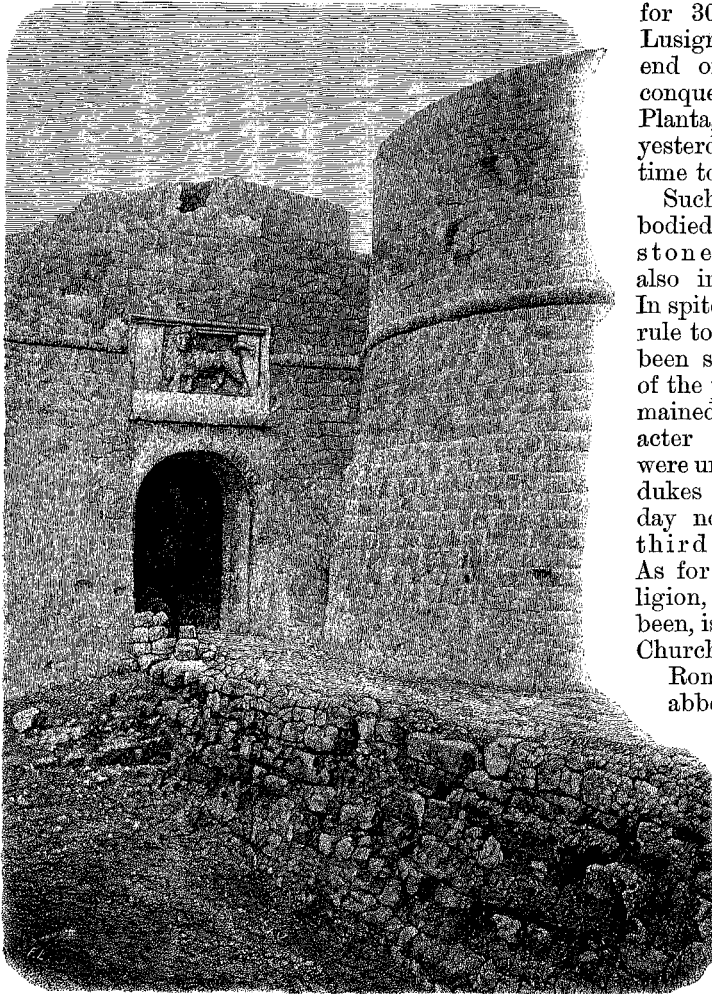
and instantly disembarked all his forces, overran the island, routed and slew his opponent, and in a short time proclaimed himself King of Cyprus. The possession, however, was soon felt by



Land-gate of Famagosta—taken from the Great Ditch.

in the aspect of its capital. In the division of the Roman Empire, it was naturally included in the eastern portion; for as many centuries as lie between ourselves and William the Conqueror, it was under the sway of Byzantine emperors or their dependents. But about the year 1190, Richard I. of England, on his way to Palestine, was drawn aside to its shores, by a curious train of circumstances. Some ships of his fleet had been wrecked, during a storm, near Limasol; and those on board them, instead of receiving assistance, had been treated by the Cyprian governor with a studied and contemptuous cruelty. As luck would have it, amongst the sufferers was no less a person than the king's betrothed, Berengaria. The king therefore no sooner learned the news than he landed, full of fury and bent on vengeance or satisfaction. The governor, Isaac Comnenus, not only refused the last, but so aggravated his offence by the manner in which he did so, that Rich-

him to be an encumbrance; and having presently sold it for a large sum to the Templars, and having had it directly after returned on his hands by them, he eventually made it over to Guy de Lusignan—the younger son of a French country gentleman, who arriving in Palestine as a penniless young adventurer, married a queen of Jerusalem, was himself elected king of it, and after her death finding his position precarious, was glad to abandon it, and accept the principality of the neighboring island. Thus was founded a dynasty which flourished three hundred years, which rose to a splendor and opulence then almost unparalleled, and was surrounded by a feudal aristocracy, in its own degree equally splendid. In time, however, reverses began to come. About the end of the fourteenth century, the Genoese seized upon Famagosta, the principal port; and they held this, despite the efforts to oust them, as a kind of commercial Gibraltar, for ninety years. Mean-



Entrance to the Castle of Famagosta.

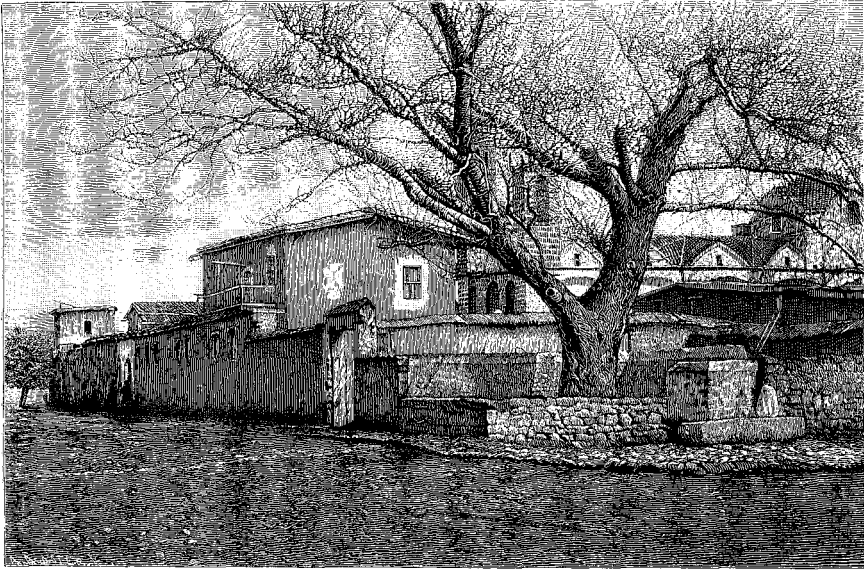
for 300 years, like the Lusignans; and at the end of that period the conquest of the crusading Plantagenet passed but yesterday for the second time to England.

Such is the history embodied not only in the stones of Nicosia, but also in its existing life. In spite of the changes of rule to which Cyprus has been subjected, the bulk of the population have remained in race and character much what they were under the Byzantine dukes or emperors. To-day no more than one-third are Mahometans. As for the rest, their religion, as it always has been, is that of the Greek Church. The Church of

Rome, in spite of its abbeys and its cathedrals, was the church of the ruling classes, never that of the people: and under the Catholic domination the two communions existed side by side, each with its own institutions. But the

while, owing to various other causes, the power and authority of the Lusignan kings was waning. During the reign of the last of them, indeed, Famagosta was recovered; but he died prematurely, and left in his place a widow. This widow was the beautiful Catherine Cornaro, of Venice, whose eyes and lips in Florence still smile on us from the canvas of Titian, the most fascinating face in the whole Uffizi Gallery: and she, having lost her infant and only son, finally resigned her kingdom in favor of the Venetian Republic. The Venetians held the island for eighty years; and then were driven from it by the Turks under the sultan Selim. The Turks held it

crusading nobles are gone, and the muezzin cries from their cathedrals; oxen and mules or the wild doves are in their chapels, whilst from the Greek campanili the bells are still sounding, congregations kneel before screens of gorgeous gilding, and hardly a mountain side is without its inhabited monastery. On the other hand, what the Mahometans lack in numbers they make up for by the possession of important buildings and the character, which, during their rule, they have impressed upon things generally. They have orientalized in appearance a race that was half oriental always: and they and that race divide the island between

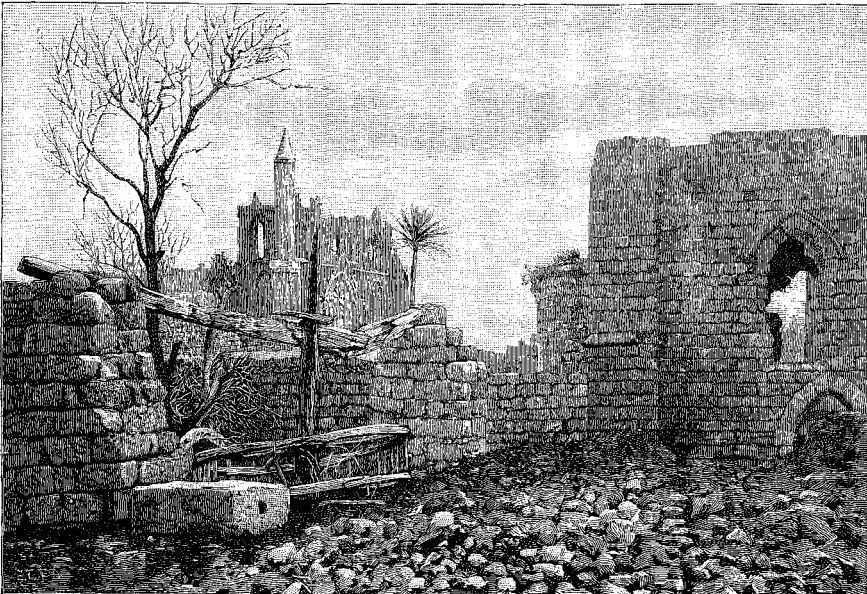


Exterior of a Greek Monastery near Nicosia.

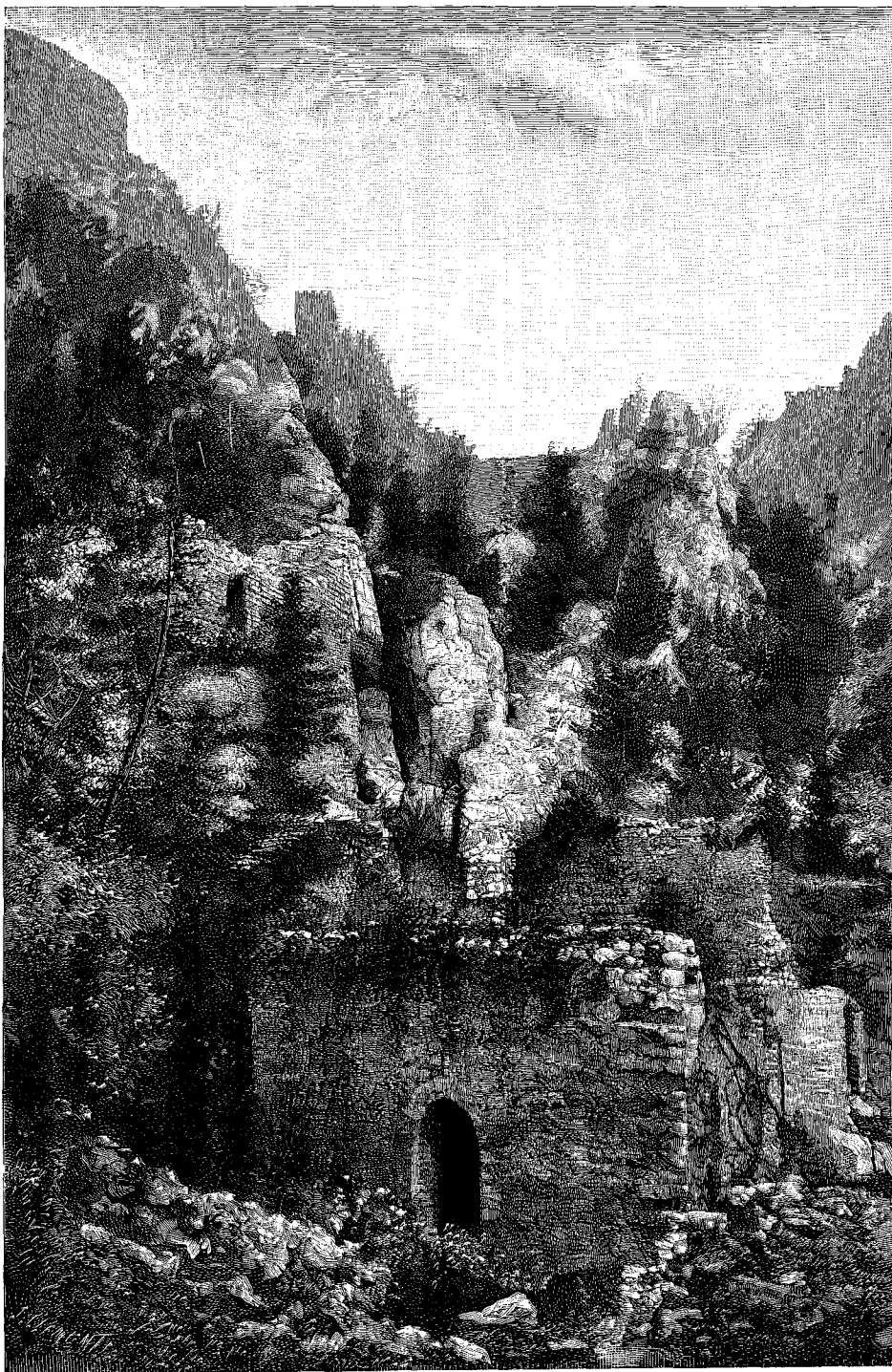
them. They divide the present, that is ; but as for the monumental past—of that the lion's share belongs to the influences that have vanished—to the religion and the chivalry of the West, and the superb cupidity of its two princely republics.

We have seen something of how this

past survives in Nicosia, with its various elements in near neighborhood or almost confused. Elsewhere we shall find these elements separate, and shall be able to see them with more distinctness and detail. I have already alluded to the ancient castle of the island. Let us



Cathedral (now a Mosque) of Famagosta. Taken from an old garden.



In the Castle of St. Hilarion.

take our stand on the northern ramparts of Nicosia, and look across the plain at the range of mountains opposite us. Here and there the eye will be at once arrested by some solitary peak, rising higher and more rugged than its neighbors; and on the highest of these we shall detect, if the day is clear, an odd white line that falters across the ways. This line is the outer rampart of Buffavento—a castle perched in mid air like a bird's nest, guarded by precipices except at a single point, and accessible only by hours of arduous climbing. East and west of it on two other peaks are two other castles, whose situation is nearly as extraordinary; and these three castles were renowned and ancient when they surrendered, for they could not be taken, to Richard Cœur de Lion. Buffavento, though the one most widely visible, has been left with less of its structure. The one which will best repay our attention is St. Hilarion, which is the most perfect, the largest, and also the most romantic in aspect.

Romantic indeed is the epithet which the sight of it first suggests to one. It looks less like a reality than a dream of Gustave Doré's. The isolated eminence on which it stands, itself like a huge tower, projects northwards from the main chain of the mountains. From the ground connecting it with these, it rises some hundreds of feet, and its northern face is a precipice of two thousand. Far down at its foot lies a belt of fertile country; and then, after a mile or two, comes the blue sheet of the sea, reaching away to the mountains of Asia Minor. On this eminence the castle is built at various levels. It crowns the summit, it projects on to rocky promontories; and its courts and guard rooms descend over the side which is less precipitous. Low down on this side we enter. We pass under an arch and through a cluster of ruinous towers, and find ourselves in an enclosure, strewn with rocks and masonry, which seems to slope upward at an angle of 45°. Beetling over us is a perpendicular crag, toward which, on our left, a wall with a series of turrets climbs up—in outline like a section of a flight of stairs. To the right, half way between the entrance and the summit, on a shoulder of rock

is an irregular pile of buildings, with its walls clinging to the ledges of the sheer northern precipice. It is pierced with windows and loopholes, and is plainly of considerable extent. Towards this instinctively one at once makes one's way: but it is a steep scramble to reach it, and one is also continually arrested by remains which at first were hidden by heather bushes and by a chaos of boulders. Close to the entrance one sees in the springing turf two black openings, perhaps two feet in diameter; and on peering into these one finds he is on the roof of a series of vaulted water tanks, of which one at least is perfect. The original red paint still tinges its cemented sides. Its shape is a perfect hexagon; and its graceful groining gives it the appearance of an oratory. Inwardly other and larger openings show themselves, some of which lead into subterranean vaults, some into chambers cut in the rock, partly constructed out of masonry; and one of these last, by the holes in the walls for rings, is seen to have been originally a long stable for camels. At length we reach a number of lofty walls—the remains of halls and passages, built against the perpendicular cliff: and picking our way along the passage that still exists, we reach the cluster of buildings a moment ago alluded to. Here we find ourselves in a labyrinth of vaulted chambers and vestibules—among them a chapel, with fragments of fresco on the walls, and a priest's room on either side of the chancel; also a loggia with large circular arches, which the opposite mountains fill like a living picture. After much climbing and descending of broken stairs, we emerge from these buildings on the farther side of the grotto, and find ourselves standing on a small grassy platform, with air below and with towering crags above. This small platform was apparently once a garden: and on every ledge of the dizzy rocks adjoining it are walls, windows, and even entire chambers. Of these last there is a suite of six, still almost perfect, except for the wooden floor, which has fallen in, leaving traces round the walls of the mosaic that originally covered it. Standing on the roof of these, which is flat and overgrown with grass, and looking up at the

heights above, one almost feels that they are pushing him from his narrow resting place. Nowhere can be seen any means of scaling them, except a shelving track, which seems hardly practicable for goats. Up this track, however, with hands and knees, and frequent clutching at twigs and projecting rocks, it is found possible to scramble; and arrived at the top, a fresh surprise awaits us, for there we pass through an archway into a large quadrangle, with a wall of rocks on two sides, and on the two others buildings—the buildings facing us being the ruins of a marble hall, seventy feet in length, with other chambers over it. The two ends of the hall still have the roof intact; and a flight of external steps with characteristic mouldings leads to the level of the floor above. There the ruin is complete: but deep mullioned windows here and there fret the sky with their tracery; and the stone seats in them are as perfect as in the days of the forgotten queens who once looked from them down at the world below. We have not, however, arrived at the top yet. Seated in one of these windows, we can see through a doorway near it the daylight glimmering on the remains of ascending steps; and looking up we realize that still there are heights above us, to which the steps lead, and that these are covered with yet loftier walls and watch-towers. The spectacle, as I saw it, was one to remain long in the memory. Looking from the sill of one of these aerial windows, far below me, like a submerged world, lay fields and olive gardens and glimmering villages and, jutting into the sea, the white town of Kerynia. Human voices and the tinkling of sheep bells rose up from the depths with a startling clearness, and far off, like a line of gigantic clouds, beyond the sea were the mountains of Asia Minor. And around me were the fantastic remains of strength, luxury, and dominance, which carried the imagination back into the dimmest recesses of history, till it peopled the courts and halls and towers with the silk-robed forms of women, the flashing of knightly armor, and a coming and going of dusky slaves and camels. Close at my feet lay the bleached bones of a kid, and overhead a vulture was wheeling in slow circles.

Such is a Cyprian castle, of the ideally mediæval type. Let us now look at another, in which the Western model has been completely changed by the climate and the conditions of the East. Aga Napa, as this building is now called, is at present used as a farm, and for some centuries it was a monastery; but it was originally the country house of one of the Frankish nobles, whose coat of arms remains untouched over the entrance. Though the upper rooms except two have disappeared, most of the lower part is in very good preservation, and as it may be considered a typical specimen of its kind, it throws considerable light on the life and civilization that produced it. It stands about a mile from the sea, in a wide, open country, and on one side of it is a cluster of magnificent trees, which are probably the remains of a wood that surrounded it. In plan it somewhat resembles the houses of Nicosia. It is built round a quadrangle; and, except where the upper walls remain, externally the windows are small—some of them mere loopholes. Above they were larger, as one that is left shows; and this is enriched by peculiar mouldings and pilasters. Of the quadrangle one side is occupied by a chapel, and one by stables. The two others are surrounded by deep cloisters, with high pointed arches of the kind already alluded to; and one of them faces a series of vaulted rooms. In the middle is a marble fountain, ornamented with carved festoons of flowers, which is approached by steps and covered by a slim cupola.

It is a significant fact, however, that though the domestic architecture of the West was thus transformed by the conditions of life in Cyprus, the religious architecture suffered but little change, except such as came from a larger and more liquid sunshine, and from the crisper shadows that emphasized its exotic arches. We must add also the change in scenery and surroundings, which, not a part of the architecture itself, yet curiously influences the effect produced by it on the observer. The finest example of this is the Abbey of Bella Pais—of Happy, or Lovely, Peace. This, like St. Hilarion, is situated on the northern range, facing the coast of

Asia Minor; hid, instead of being perched aloft on a rugged pinnacle, it lies on the lower slopes, where the banks are fledged with vegetation, where the mule-paths wander under the shade of branching olives or dark-leaved carob trees or slanting pine woods, and the deep gullies are almost hidden with leaves. One sees as one travels toward it, on either side of one, terraced vineyards, or fertile patches of plough land, or under the olives emerald grass flickering. The abbey itself stands on the brink of a steep rock, and overlooks a hollow filled with acacias and oleanders, among which, sharply distinguishable, are poplars and groups of date palms. Behind it a village rises, unusually clear and near, the white houses shining among a crowd of slender cypresses; cottage gardens, with vines and wells, creep up to its walls; and high overhead silvery crags look down on it, whose sides are dotted with dark trees and shrubs, like multitudes of green sheep. The main body of it was built round a cloistered quadrangle, and was arranged on pillars. On one side was the abbot's lodging; opposite to that was the kitchen, the chapter house, and above, the monks' dormitories; and the two other sides were respectively entirely occupied by the church and by the refectory. The abbot's lodging has wholly disappeared; but the church and the refectory are as perfect as on the day when they were built, though a row of upper chambers has since filled each. But perhaps the most striking and fascinating feature of the church is the cloisters. They remind one of those of Magdalen College, Oxford, except that through their tracery one looks at such a different scene—at oranges, lemons, cypresses, and the silvery summits of the mountains, and the sky, the like of which has never been seen in England. The Abbey of Happy Peace—it is indeed named appropriately. This magnificent pile was built during the thirteenth century: and its present condition is due to the barbarity of the Turks during the period of their conquest.

From this picture let us turn to what may be called its counterpart—a monastery of the Greeks. A good specimen is to be found not far from Nicosia; and

it presents a curious contrast to what we have just been considering. It stands in a fertile part of the great central plain, with a grove of trees close to it and a wooded village in its neighborhood. In appearance externally it is certainly picturesque, but suggests to our minds a farm rather than a monastery. The church alone has any architectural pretension, and this is bold and forbidding in its antique simplicity: while there is little but mud and whitewash. Now the life of the place is oddly in keeping with its aspect. Brown monks with long dangling hair, and faces kindly but altogether illiterate, hang about in desultory groups, ready to flock round a stranger with a curiosity that would be annoying if it were not so childlike. Mixed with these, too, in the most fraternal and sisterly way, are wrinkled old crones and farm laborers, all apparently a part of the establishment; one of which last will perhaps put a new life into the scene by suddenly leading from the stable a troupe of unsuspected camels. The impression of a farm grows on one; the whole scene is redolent of the furrows. But we have not understood its full character until we enter the church. Then the religious element for the first time steals into the mind, in a scent of stale incense; and one of the monks who is sure to enter with us will softly accompany us to the screen at the east end. This, as in most Greek churches, is a mass of florid gilding, panelled with grotesque and gaudy pictures of saints. One panel amongst the rest will instantly catch the eye, which not only seems to be in itself peculiar, but is also signalized by tapers burning before it. On nearer inspection we shall see that this is not a picture at all but a relief in beaten gold of the Madonna and Child, studded with jewels and almost half concealed by a curtain of antique tapestry. We have here one of the most sacred relics of the East—an object of pilgrimage to the Orthodox from every quarter. For behind the gold—too precious to be exposed itself—is the picture of the Virgin Mother painted by St. Luke the Evangelist, and brought to Cyprus from Byzantium 900 years ago. As to its authenticity we

may each have our own opinion : but for 900 years, at all events, this treasure has a plausible history. It is kept usually not here, but in the parent monastery of Cicco, far among the mountains ; and it was brought down, last year, during a drought, to its present station among the plains in order to procure rain for the neighborhood, which was specially in need of it.

Such is a Cyprian monastery, which is in many ways typical. Outside is a farm-yard, swimming with puddles ; inside, hidden with gold and jewels, is one of the chief objects of the faith and the devotion of millions. But in Cyprus that faith and devotion have peculiar characteristics of their own. Though the Hellenic temples have fallen, and the earth covers their columns, the Hellenic religion still lives to-day—persistent through all these ages—in the religion of the Christian peasantry. The birth of Venus from the foam of the Cyprian sea is celebrated annually at Larnaka, under a thin disguise, by a marine festival, half fair and half regatta ; and one favorite name of the Madonna is Aphroditissa.

But space will not permit me to linger over the Greeks. I can introduce the reader to but one scene more, and that scene will be essentially Western. To me it was the most impressive and interesting thing in Cyprus. I am speaking of the city of Famagosta. Famagosta to most people is hardly so much as a name : to very few is it more. Those whose attention has been turned to these localities are aware that it was a place of importance from the days of the Ptolemies and of Augustus ; that it subsequently rose to a fresh importance under the Lusignans ; that under the Genoese it was one of the richest trading towns in the world ; that the Venetians recognized and treated it as the key to Cyprus ; that against it was directed the first Turkish attack, and that here the Turks encountered the most desperate and heroic resistance.

It is situated on the sea, on the eastern coast of the island, at one end of the great central plain. The harbor, which is now nearly filled up, was in former days capacious ; and by the ex-

penditure of no exorbitant sum it might be made capable of holding the entire Channel fleet. To the north and west it is surrounded by sand-swept wolds, which are bounded far off by a line of purple mountains. To the south the ground is more fertile. Approached from the land, it looks less like a town than like one enormous fort. Here and there at a distance we see a tower or an elevated battery ; but the long lines of the walls, brown and melancholy, only just peer over the slope that swells toward them. It is from the south side that one enters. My first visit was in the morning, and the day was soft and blue, with a beauty passing even that of the Riviera. The road ran through a deep-green meadow of asphodel, across which was moving a bevy of Turkish women, who, in their white yashmaks, shone like a bed of lilies. Before me the asphodel rose toward the length of the fortification, while the road lost itself in a cutting under a dark cluster of towers. Arrived at this cutting, one realized the character of the place better. One saw that it was surrounded by an enormous moat or trench cut in the solid rock ; and that the walls were really some fifty feet in height. The road crossed the ditch on a causeway of nine arches and entered a gate, before which a drawbridge once descended. What struck me most, at first, was the wonderful preservation of the masonry. The stains of the weather left a frown upon everything ; but there was no decay or crumbling. On entering, this impression deepened. Dark, unbroken arches were sharp and solid over my head, and the passage ended with an open vaulted space that seemed like a baron's hall. Close behind it, yawning and shadowy in the sunshine, was another open vault similar to it, facing the interior, and hollowed in the thickness of the ramparts ; and in the shadow of this were other vaulted openings leading away into black, mysterious passages.

And what of the town ? I had heard that it was ruinous, but I was quite unprepared for the peculiar aspect of its desolation. Immediately facing one on entering, was a dilapidated Turkish café, built against the fortifications ; to the left was a roofless Turkish hut,

and to the right a lane of cottages wandered away fortuitously; but through a wide gap was visible an open space beyond, and making my way to this, the whole of Famagosta burst upon me. I was in the midst of a desert. The great walls ran on unbroken on one side of me, but on the other were grassy expanses littered with huge heaps of stones and crowded with ancient churches. Many of them stood within fifty yards of one another, and my eye and my arithmetic were quite bewildered by their number. I made my way toward one, across a small field, climbing over a rude enclosure and stumbling now and again over some broken pieces of carving. I entered the door, and found myself in the hollow gloom of those vaulted isles, with sand and refuse strewing the uneven floor and everywhere on the walls around me the remains of gorgeous frescoes. I mounted the ramparts to obtain a wider view; and a wide desolation was before me with more churches standing in it.

The Turkish cottages, with their flat mud roofs, and one or two larger buildings used for government purposes hardly broke the impression of perfect solitude. The few figures to be seen and the few sounds to be heard only added to it. Here and there a shepherd was sitting under a palm tree; a group of children played on a ruined wall; sometimes a voice called; sometimes a sheep-bell tinkled; and ever and again over the heaps that once were palaces, faint yet crisp, came the long plash of the sea. As I examined the scene, three objects struck me specially. One was a cluster of low towers, at an angle of the town toward the sea. Another was a ruined chancel, whose tall, slender arches showed like a skeleton in the sky. The third was a church larger than all the others. I at once recognized it as the cathedral, which I knew existed there. I made my way toward this last through a network of sunken lanes, along which were built some of the poor habitations I have mentioned: and my first near view of it was through the wicket of an old woman's garden. In many ways it is like the cathedral of Lichfield, only more florid in carving; the stone is of a peculiar tawny color, something like

a lion's skin; and instead of its two towers it is spiked now with a tall minaret. I entered the garden. This, over half its little area, was rank with luxuriant green-stuff: but half was bare, for the simple reason that half was occupied by the stones of ruined mediæval buildings. In one corner of it was a dilapidated Persian water-wheel, for a wall on one side it had the ruin of a small church; the path at my feet was strewn with fragments of pottery; and above all these, itself no longer Christian, the forlorn cathedral lifted its English outlines. Before me, visibly and materially, were the very images that were in the mind of the preacher when he wrote the verses by which so many best remember him. The pitcher was broken at the fountain, and the wheel was broken at the cistern, and everything in the stillness seemed to be saying of man that he was gone to his long home. The sentiment was in the air; it breathed like "an unheard melody;" it was drawn out and repeated on all sides as if by some soundless orchestra.

I could not, however, remain there listening to this indefinitely; so presently made my way to the ruined chancel, through whose arches the brilliant sea was glimmering, and under whose shadow some Turkish children played. Thence across a perfect waste I passed to the solemn-looking castle, which stood like a bastion at the northeast angle of the walls, and projected partly into the sea. There was nothing beautiful in its appearance, but it was impressive for its antiquity, its preservation, and its forbidding strength. Externally there was not a single window—nothing but blind walls and huge bulging towers. But, for all that, it was in many ways interesting. Over the gate, let into the ancient stonework, was the lion of the Venetian Republic; and mounting to the battlements by an external stair, I saw, standing in the sea and approached by a neck of masonry, a circular building which is named *Torre del Moro*. There tradition says were the quarters of a Venetian governor, *Christoforo Moro*; and he was none other than the prototype of *Othello*. This made the remote and rarely visited walls at once seem

familiar, and peopled them with well-known figures ; and I pleased myself by fancying that, in a sombre Gothic hall, with heavy pillars and vaulting of enormous thickness, I had discovered the place where Iago made the "cannakin clink."

And here I am compelled to end. Those who are acquainted with the writings and the discoveries of Di Cesnola will of course be aware that there are aspects of Cyprus and its history on

which I have not even glanced. I have written—if I may so express myself—as an impressionist, not as an antiquarian. The scenes and impressions I have described are few ; but so far as they go they are typical : and if anyone finds a charm in remote and neglected beauty, and cares to bend over the face of the past rather than dissect its body, I hope I may have conveyed to him some idea of the charm which is still to be found in this famous but neglected island.

A JAR OF ROSE-LEAVES.

By Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

1.

MYRIAD roses fade unheeded
Yet no note of grief is needed ;
When the ruder breezes tear them,
Sung or songless, we can spare them.
But the choicest petals are
Shrined in some deep orient jar,
Rich without and sweet within,
Where we cast the rose-leaves in.

2.

Life has jars of costlier price
Framed to hold our memories.
There we treasure baby smiles,
Boyish exploits, girlish wiles,
All that made our childish days
Sweeter than these trodden ways
Where the Fates our fortunes spin.
Memory, toss the rose-leaves in !

3.

What the jar holds, that shall stay ;
Time steals all the rest away.
Cast in love's first stolen word,
Bliss when uttered, bliss when heard ;
Maiden's looks of shy surprise ;
Glances from a hero's eyes ;
Palms we risked our souls to win ;
Memory, fling the rose-leaves in !

4.

Now more sombre and more slow
Let the incantation grow !
Cast in shreds of rapture brief,
Subtle links 'twixt hope and grief ;
Vagrant fancy's dangerous toys ;
Covert dreams, narcotic joys
Flavored with the taste of sin ;
Memory, pour the rose-leaves in !

5.

Quit that borderland of pain !
Cast in thoughts of nobler vein,
Magic gifts of human breath,
Mysteries of birth and death.
What if all this web of change
But prepare for scenes more strange ;
If to die be to begin ?
Memory, heap the rose-leaves in !