

Abbey could show, in all their roofs, groining whose ribs rose and met more gracefully, or more complete preservation of the overarching stone. To another feature they could show no parallel at all—to the palms and oleanders on which the windows opened, and which, seen through this Gothic framework, looked like the work of sorcery. Presently I espied a passage leading to some regions beneath. I descended some broken steps which led me into a dim twilight, and, advancing a little, I came upon two crypts, perfect as the hall above, but not a third of its height, and sustaining their ponderous vaulting on low hexagonal columns.

Reascending, I again betook myself to the cloisters. Having seen the rest of the building, I could now devote myself to these; and for the first time I fully enjoyed the fascinating strange effect of them. I have already compared them to those of Magdalen; but for me they had suggestions not of Magdalen only, but of Melrose, of Dryburgh, of Fountains—I need not prolong the list. They were all Gothic cloisters in one; they were all the spiritual seclusions in which mediæval northern piety had ever walked and meditated; only they were sublimated into something lighter and more aërial; the shadows clung to their carvings with an unnatural crispness; and the scene outside, which filled every arch like a picture, dazzled and bewildered the fancy till it seemed to be seeing double. Orange trees, palms, cypresses, the spires of silvery moun-