

gave to the scene its most peculiar character still remains to be mentioned. It was a flock of churches, most of them almost entire, which were standing in this solitude, like a flock of scattered sheep. Wherever I looked a fresh one caught my eye. Some of them were hardly twenty yards from each other. When I entered the town my thoughts had been of Venice and Genoa: these churches took me back to the crusaders. The sight, as I realised it, affected me like a burst of devotional music, vibrating far off from the lost ages of faith, distinct, and yet so faint that it made me hold my breath to hear it. It surrounded me with a new atmosphere, in which new thoughts were whispering; and amongst other things it occurred to me that outside of Palestine this was the most eastward town of all the crusading world—the town nearest to the Holy Sepulchre.

I descended from my elevation, and stumbling over the uneven ground, I made my way to the church that happened to be closest to me—a plain structure externally consisting of three aisles. I entered by a side door, the principal one being closed. I shall always remember that moment, when I found myself in the hollow shade, in the faintly echoing silence, of the interior. The floor was covered with refuse and drifted sea-sand; a mud pen for cattle obstructed one of the aisles, and shadows of faded frescoes were glimmering on the walls all around me. Of these the most distinct was a group of the twelve Apostles, which still made round the chancel a con-