

the Templars, the knights of S. John and of the Teutonic Order migrated. They took possession of it, and fortified it with walls and towers, especially the port, near which they built a very strong castle, facing the sea on one side. Within the town they built Latin churches and convents of which the ruins are still visible, but only one wretched church remains standing, without bells. Its ornaments are of the poorest kind, and they call to prayer with bits of wood. A few Latin clergy still live there, but (as we shall show) their habits are not edifying. Ruin in many forms has stricken the city, the hatred of the Saracens towards the knights of the Temple, of S. John, and of the Teutonic Order, earthquakes, and floods rushing down from the mountain behind. On its slopes are made excellent vines, and the vines are said to be so large that a man cannot clasp his arms round their stems. Carobs too grow there in great number.

Above Nimona is a certain wooded spot so full of serpents and noxious animals that no one can live there. Nevertheless in the middle of the wood some ancient fathers built a monastery, so that being surrounded with serpents they might be less exposed to the visits of worldlings, which are known to disturb devout monks. But lest the serpents should molest the inmates of the convent they maintain a number of cats, who naturally make a prey of snakes, mice, dormice and rats, and do not allow such to approach the walls: and daily war is waged between the cats and the snakes to drive the latter from the walls. At night they remain within, and roam about the offices lest any reptile be hidden there, but during the day they hunt in the wood, and when their dinner hour comes the monk on duty rings a bell, at the sound of which they all run to the place where they are fed. For the mouse catcher has good hearing and better smell, but best of all is his sight, which can pierce the shades of night, hence he is called cat: for *cattus* means cunning, and the ancients thought that cats were akin to the *Genii* or *Lares*, saying that *Genii* though unseen by men could not remain invisible to cats. They tell me that Brutus was doing something one night in the house with a light, and saw a black figure. He asked what it was. "I am thy evil genius," it answered, and vanished. For the ancients laid down that every man had always at his side a good and an evil genius, just as Christian truth tells us that with every man are coupled two angels, one good, the other bad. The *Lares* were said to be the sons of Mercury and the nymph Lar. They lived in the homes of men, and guarded them, their seat being in the common hall of the house, near the fire, and there men paid them due reverence, a custom not wholly fallen into disuse. And because cats have flashing eyes, and like to lie on the ashes near the fire they said they were of kin to the *Genii*, *Lares*, *Penates*.

There are many other notable things in Cyprus, such as the mountain of the Holy Cross, of which I have already spoken. So much then for the description of Cyprus.

The condition of the island, its organization and government so far as regards temporal matters, its four dioceses, have been set forth at sufficient length in the preceding pages. As to the bishops and clergy both secular and regular I can only speak with bitterness of spirit, and were I moved to speak I must lift up my voice to heaven. It were supremely necessary for the dignity of the Catholic faith that to countries like Cyprus, the outworks and bounds of Christianity, were sent bishops of ripe age and strong character, who should live in their sees, and by their teaching and example should bring not only their own flocks but Greeks, Armenians, and other Eastern heretics and schismatics to love the Roman Church, and provoke the Saracens and Turks to admire their striking virtues. For Cyprus is encompassed on all sides by these monstrous races, which send men daily into all parts of the island for business. So that experience is more necessary here than holiness at Rome: and excess is more pardonable there than an evil example here.