

many trees full of carobs, which the vulgar call S. John's bread. We wound up this valley in grateful shade, for the sun which was already firing the adjoining hills could not yet reach us in the valley. At last we arrived at a steep slope which our beasts could not climb: we tied them to trees, and toiled up on foot perspiring freely. For the mountain is high and precipitous, and exactly resembles M. Thabor in the Holy Land, on which our Lord was transfigured. I heard this from one who had ascended both. When we reached the top we knelt in prayer before the church, and sat down in the breeze before entering it, to recover our breath, to wipe off our sweat and get cool. Then, as was fitting, I hurried on before the rest, entered the church and pulled the bell to warn the sacristan. There appeared at once a clerk who knew no Latin. He brought out some very old Latin books, with what else was necessary for the mass. The bell was rung, and I read the mass of the Holy Cross, with the collects for the holy martyrs John and Paul, and for travellers. After mass I returned to my brethren and preached to them on the fitting veneration of the Holy Cross, and explained the difference between the cross we were going to see, and that of our Lord, and the respect to be shown to each. I exhorted them also not to pry too curiously, nor crave to see a miracle, for not even in Jerusalem, in the most holy sepulchre of our Lord, were we going to see a miracle, much less should we expect one here. This I said because we heard about that cross strange and wonderful things which were to be seen there. I then took a lighted candle, and passed over to where the cross was: my brother pilgrims followed me, and the chaplain accompanied me. When we came to the place the chaplain opened it, so that we had the holy cross before our eyes. I first went up and kissed the cross, and observed it carefully before and behind. Then my companions approached and did it reverence, one after the other looking at it carefully. The cross is fairly large, covered in front with silver-gilt plates, but on the side to the wall it is bare, of a fair and sound wood like cypress. They say it is the cross of Dysmas, the thief on the right hand to whom Jesus on the cross promised Paradise. For S. Helen when she found under Mount Calvary three crosses threw away one, namely that of Gesmas, the thief on the left. The second, that of Dysmas, she kept for herself. The third, the cross of Christ, she exposed to the veneration of the whole world. But her own cross, that of Dysmas, she carried whole from Jerusalem to this mountain, and here she built a large monastery of monks, and a church, in which she left this cross as a relic of rare value, and caused to be built for it near the altar a niche or shrine, and set it therein. And there it still remains, untouched, though long since the monastery was utterly destroyed by the Turks and Saracens, and the monks of S. Benedict, who served the church, are scattered.

Wonderful is the position or location of this cross in its place. It is in a niche dimly lighted, both its arms are sunk in recesses made in the wall, and its foot is sunk in a recess in the floor. But the recesses of the arms and the foot are large, disproportionately so to what they hold, yet does not the cross touch the wall, but is absolutely free from any contact with it; and this is the wonderful story about the cross that it hangs in the air without support, and yet it stands as firmly as though it were attached by the strongest nails, or bonded to the wall, which it is not, for all these recesses are large, so that a man can put in his hand and feel that there is no fixture in the back or the head of the cross. I might have examined it more curiously than I did, but I feared God, and what I forbade others to do I ought not to do myself. For I ascended this mountain to do honour to this cross, not to find a miracle or to tempt God. That this cross may be the more worthy of veneration they have set in it a small piece of the true cross of Christ. In this chapel hangs a bell, which we rang, and I said to my companions that we should hear no more bells until we returned to Christian lands.