

saints painted on gilded panels: but one of these panels was only half visible; it was draped by a jewelled curtain of faded but rich embroidery, and hanging before it were two burning lamps. Coming close to it, I saw that the panel, in place of a picture, contained a relief, in beaten gold, of the Madonna, the neck, the wrists, and the aureole being studded with precious stones. This was merely the veil, however, the outer covering, of the real treasure—a thing far too precious for exposure: for behind that plate of gold was, or was supposed to be, the picture of the Madonna painted by St. Luke the Evangelist. Whether the relic is genuine it is not my province to discuss. Millions of Christians at least believe it to be so; and for the whole body of the orthodox it stands, as an object of pilgrimage, second only to the holy places of Jerusalem.

When we went outside again there was a certain stir in the court. From a stable door which I had not before noticed there was being led out a long train of camels. They gave to the scene an odd patriarchal character, as they passed through the gates, driven by a brown lay-brother; and when presently we followed them out ourselves, we saw them by some trees at a distance, drinking out of a stone cistern.

Before dinner that day I made another excursion—but where, or in what direction, it is quite beyond me to say. Sir Robert, who was generally busy the whole of the afternoon, was accustomed to take a