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IX.

## JERUSALEM—THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

No one can approach the Church of the Holy Sepulchre without reverence. Whether, as tradition affirms, it really covers the site of the crucifixion and entombment of Our Lord is, of course, a question long in dispute among archaeologists and scholars. But no man can tread ground that has been trodden by the worshipping millions, that have come from all quarters of the globe, through long centuries, to pray in this spot, without being touched by a sympathetic thrill. From the time of the Empress Helena, that is from the year 326 A.D., this spot has been held as the most sacred upon earth by the great Eastern and Western Churches, and myriads of enthusiastic and tireless pilgrims have ever since annually wended their weary way hither to engage in the solemnities of the Eastertide festival.

The first church on this spot was built by the Emperor Constantine, and the present one by the Crusaders. It is a vast irregular pile of buildings, many times rebuilt and added to; and hemmed in, as it is, by the crowding dwellings around it, has little that is attractive from an artistic point of view. There is, however, a picturesqueness in the *façade*, irregular as it is, and an interest higher than that of art in the whole quaint but venerable congeries of structures upon which one comes suddenly as he turns down a narrow lane in the middle of the Christian quarter.

It was in a pouring rain—on the only rainy day I saw in Palestine—that I paid my first visit to this celebrated spot. The shops in the lane approaching the church are, many of them, devoted