

we could not see more than a few feet before us. Sounds that were strange to our ears—a slow monotonous chant—guided us to the Holy Sepulchre, and we found that the Schismatic Armenian priests were singing a solemn mass within its cramped and narrow area. This function was near the end when we came, and as our turn would be next, we drew lots to determine the order in which we should celebrate. I was the fourth. After the Armenian sacristan had removed everything connected with the service just mentioned, a Franciscan Brother quickly re-arranged the "altar" by placing a wooden "mensa" furnished with altar-cloths, etc. over the Sepulchre, and we said mass in rotation. This inestimable privilege was vouchsafed us on Friday, September 15th,—the octave of our Blessed Lady's Nativity, and within the octave of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross;—coincidences enough, you will readily admit, to bring joy to the heart of a Passionist!

And now, a few words relative to the great church under whose roof we had just passed the night, and which, after a modest refectory in the dining room of the hospice mentioned a moment ago, we spent the morning in examining.

To begin, then, it stands upon the site of the magnificent temple erected in the fourth century of the Christian era by Constantine the Great and destroyed some two hundred and seventy-eight years later by Chosroes, King of the Persians. From that period until 1130, when it was rebuilt in its present form by the Crusaders, it passed through various phases of demolition and reconstruction. In point of architecture it is partly Roman and partly Saracenic, with an admixture of the Byzantine and Gothic styles — this variety attesting to the several phases just referred to and accounting for them. Its mean dimensions are 200 by 190 feet ;

but, what with its irregular shape and its numerous dependencies, the area it covers is far greater than these figures would lead one to infer. That which most impresses the beholder while contemplating this huge pile is its massiveness ; for of beauty, symmetry and grace there is little, and that only in detached instances. When I reflected, however, that it had been destined to cover a number of sacred sites at a considerable distance from each other and situated in different directions, it was quite clear to me that appearances had been sacrificed to utility, rather than caused by a want of taste. And while noting its almost utter lack of richness and adornment, it would be unfair to lose sight of the fact that the wealth of an empire was not at the disposal of its projectors, as was the case with the superb edifice which was raised by the first Christian emperor and his saintly mother over our Saviour's tomb. Furthermore, apart from the ravages of time, the vicissitudes consequent upon the occupation of the Holy Land by the infidel and rapacious followers of Mohammed during twelve centuries odd, coupled with the evils resulting from the preponderating influence of the Schismatic-Greek authorities in the management of the great basilica, have had more to do with its sadly altered condition, under a variety of aspects, than it would be possible for me to express with any satisfaction to you or to myself, unless, indeed, I were to "write a book." Still, grandeur and majesty are not wanting to it—a circumstance which is particularly true of the portion enclosing the Holy Sepulchre. This most sacred of earthly shrines reposes within a rotunda sixty feet in diameter, composed of eighteen gigantic pillars which rise to an immense height and support a double row of arcades, or galleries, one above the other, all surmounted by a magnificent dome