

upon Spain would prove exceedingly difficult: the country was far off, mountainous, barren, and every step would cost blood and peril. Not but they must carry out the constant injunction of their ancestors to extend the empire by ever new conquests, and keep alive the vigour which spreads through the whole body into its outlying members, but they need not seek in scattered and remote regions the ephemeral glory of ideal conquests, whose achievement were difficult, and their maintenance certain to dissipate the power of the nation.

Selim, encouraged by this reasoning, but still more incited by his own inclination for the enterprise, decided to carry it out, declaring that he would himself lead to the war a force worthy of his empire, and with his own royal presence offer resistance to any attack from the Christian princes. Setting aside therefore his project of uniting the Don and the Volga by a great canal (which was to facilitate his passage into Persia), having allayed certain risings of Arabs, and having received from the Pasha of Erzerum news of the peaceful disposition of the King of Persia, he issued strict orders for the construction of a large number of bomb-vessels in the Gulf of Ayas, and in the Mediterranean; for the fitting out with all speed of the old galleys, and the building of new vessels, and sent express commands to the Beylerbey of Anatolia (Captain General of Asia Minor) to concentrate the troops in all the provinces in Caramania.

Such were the preparations of the Turks for an attack on the island of Cyprus, and although other pretexts were alleged to excuse them, common rumour and certain unmistakeable signs made their purpose clear, as Marcantonio Barbaro, ambassador to the Porte, was able to assure the Senate.

There were however not a few Senators who flattered themselves that Selim would not, at the beginning of his reign, plunge into a difficult war, which might stir up the Christian princes to injure his empire. They clung to their opinion so obstinately as to impress on the Senate that they should use the greatest caution in their warlike preparations, so as not to divert the Turks from any other enterprise which they might have in view, and not to draw down on the Republic an attack which was probably designed for the injury of others. But ideas of delay were soon exchanged for those of anxious haste, when the Senate was assured by fresh despatches from their ambassador that the Turkish preparations were aimed solely at the island of Cyprus. Everyone was excited to rivalry in making suggestions, and in carrying out the decisions of the Senate. It was resolved to fit out one hundred light galleys: eleven commanders were chosen for the large galleys, and Francesco Duodo, a man already illustrious in naval warfare, was appointed to lead them, with the title of Captain. The command of the armed ships was entrusted to Pietro Trono: and to increase the strength of the whole fleet it was decided to man a galleon of extraordinary size, whose bulk and strength should be the guard and stay of the smaller vessels. The command of this was given to Girolamo Contarini. The supreme command of the naval armaments was given to Girolamo Zane, Procurator of S. Mark: he had been elected two years before, but had not set out, and was considered legally entitled to remain in office.

A naval force of considerable importance was thus in preparation, and no less energy was shown in reinforcing the garrison in the strongholds of Cyprus, Dalmatia and others in the Levant. They were much strengthened in numbers, and their duties increased, for the greater safety of the forts and the better discipline of the men.

As however it was Cyprus rather than the other places which was threatened, the Senate hurried the departure of Eugenio Singlitico, a Cypriot noble, who held the post of adjutant-general of the land forces, with a thousand foot soldiers. Girolamo Martinengo, a *condottiere*, was sent there with two thousand foreign infantry: and as the rumour of prompt