

'till the year 1571, when the Turks took it, in the reign of Sultan Selim II. This emperor is said to have set his heart so fully on the conquest of this island, from his remarkable fondness for the wine; but others say he was animated to it by a Portuguese Jew.

This Jew, called Jean Miches, had embraced Christianity, but for several vile practices was banished his country, and retired to Venice. But he did not long reside there before he became known, and on a well-grounded suspicion of his having formed a design of setting fire to the arsenal, on the night of the 13th of September, 1569, he was banished from the Venetian territories. Revenge carried him to Constantinople, where he married the daughter of a Jew with an immense fortune. His riches giving him an opportunity of obtaining an audience of the Emperor Selim, and his artful discourse having introduced himself into the favour of that prince, he suggested to him the design of besieging Cyprus.

It is said, that Selim being once merry with drinking, gently struck Miches on the shoulder, saying to him, "If heaven prospers my design, thou shalt be king of Cyprus." Soon after, namely in the year 1570, the Turks landed in the island, and laid siege to Nicosia, which sustained a siege of forty-eight days. In the following year they took Famagusta, but not before firing fifteen thousand cannon shot against it; tho' the governor, after so brave a defence, was, contrary to a particular promise, and the articles of capitulation, put to a cruel death by the Turkish Pasha; after which the whole island soon came into their hands.

The number of inhabitants in the island of Cyprus cannot be determined with any exactness, many removing every year, on account of the prodigious taxes. Some years since the number was said to exceed two hundred thousand; and during the reign of the Emperor Trajan this island must have been very populous; for Dion Cassius relates, that the Jews, in order to free themselves from the Roman yoke, massacred twenty-four thousand natives in one day; but at present hardly a Jew is to be seen, the Franks generally making use of Greeks in their commerce.

It is supposed to be owing to the warmth of the climate that the Cyprians do not exceed a middle stature, are rather lean than fat, and rather brisk than strong. They are of a brown complexion, like the rest of the Greeks; and both their eyes and hair black. They are also of a quick and piercing genius.

In former times the inhabitants of Cyprus were famous for voluptuousness and magnificence. The most common utensils among all people of fashion were silver; and not a peasant's cottage to be seen without several pieces of plate. The rich even grew tired of their horses, and both in country and town would use only mules; but the sovereign, fearing that their noble breed of horses would by this means degenerate, issued a proclamation against the use of mules; but the horses are not now so highly valued as formerly.

The women here, especially at Lernica, are not the most beautiful I have seen; but allowance must be made for the climate, and manner of living. They dress in the same manner as those of Rhodes, except that in Cyprus they wear no veils. Their hair is covered before, but hangs down behind in curls. They also wear those large wide plaited gowns I have already mentioned at Scio.

It is known by experience that the inhabitants of this island seldom attain to any great age, owing possibly to the badness of the air; malignant fevers being common here, especially towards the end of summer; and during our stay in the island, though it was in the spring, a contagious distemper was raging at Nicosia. But the air is most noxious at Famagusta and Lernica, owing to the vapours rising from the fens and salt pans in the neighbourhood. And at Lernica the air is most unhealthy when the sun is above the horizon.

The whole island does not afford one single river; but several ponds, lakes, and fens;