

Ptolomey, for having refused to pay his ransom to a pyrate, by whom he had been taken. In consequence of his resentment, while he was a tribune, he moved the senate for a decree, declaring Cyprus a Roman province. They did not at all doubt of their being able to reduce an island, the inhabitants of which were enfeebled by luxury and immersed in pleasure; and they well knew, that could they once obtain possession of it, Ptolomey would neither be able, nor would he attempt to wrest it out of their hands. They therefore, without ceremony, sent Marcus Cato to take possession of it; and he, by stripping individuals of their superfluities, sent immense treasures to Rome.

After the division of the empire, it naturally became subject to the eastern emperor, and so continued until the end of the twelfth century, when Richard the first of England, in his expedition to the Holy Land, deprived Isaac Comnenus of the crown, for his want of hospitality to those sanctified warriors, and gave it to the knights Templars, who afterwards sold it to Guy de Lusignan, when he lost his kingdom of Jerusalem: after his death, it passed through a variety of masters, until it was inherited by Charlotta, whose bastard-brother James dethroned her and her husband Lewis of Savoy, usurped the throne, and married Catherine a Venetian lady, of the Cornara family. He died soon after his marriage, and left the kingdom to her, although she was then pregnant. Some historians affirm that he was poisoned; and that his posthumous son met with the same fate, from the barbarous politics of the queen's brother, George Cornara, who prevailed upon her to resign the Sovereignty in favour of the republic of Venice. After this resignation, which took place about the latter end of the fifteenth century, she lived retired in a country house not far from the city, upon a very moderate income.

If the Venetians obtained this island by such horrid crimes, they shamefully lost it by the negligence, jealousy, and cursed pride of those to whom the preservation of it was intrusted; especially of Dandoli; who had assumed the supreme command; and Count Rocas, who was a brave but empty madman.

About the year 1570, the Turks made themselves masters of all Cyprus, except Famagosta, which did not surrender until the year following; when the infidels committed unheard-of barbarities. Twenty thousand were butchered in Nicosia, after the town was taken; the old of both sexes, with the ugly women and children unfit for service, were built up within one funeral pile, in the market-place, and there burned alive: an action which, in horror, transcends anything I have seen upon record. All the rest were loaded with chains, about five and twenty thousand were carried off the island and sold to slavery, and two of the largest vessels were filled with jewels, plate and furniture of prodigious value.

On board of one of these ships Mustapha Pasha, who commanded in chief, put the noblesse and most beautiful of the women, to grace his own triumph, and to enrich the seraglio of his Sovereign: but one of the ladies, having procured a lighted match, crept down into the powder-room, and blew up the ship: the fire was immediately communicated to the other vessel: so that both were instantly destroyed, with every person and thing which they contained, except two or three individuals, who escaped with their lives. I shall give you another instance, from which you may judge what dependence is to be placed upon Turkish faith or humanity.

Famagosta was gloriously defended by Bragadino and Baglione, who inspired not only the soldiers, but all the inhabitants, and even the women, with so much heroism, that whatever their leaders could contrive or command, the others had intrepidity enough to execute; together with a resolution to bear up against all extremities, even such as are almost incredible.