

From the bridge we ascended an eminence, and entered upon an extensive tableland, intersected with low hills, of a singular appearance and formation; they are composed of a gravelly substance, some of them square and others round, with flat summits and vertical sides; the nature and appearance of the country, in other respects, the same as that between Larnica and Atteno. At the tenth mile was a small hamlet; and at the fourteenth, the city of Nicosia, the ancient Tamasis, broke upon the view, at no greater distance than five or six hundred yards: it made a fine appearance, and bore a striking resemblance to Shiraz in Persia, when that beautiful city is first seen on issuing from the gorges of the mountains behind the tomb of Hafiz. Like the capital of Fars, it is situated in a noble plain, bounded by the lofty mountains tipped with snow, whilst its numerous spires and minarets are seen to rise in the same manner above the branches of the trees; but the fine cathedral of St Sophia, towering over the heads of all the other buildings, combined with the extent and solidity of the walls and bastions, give an air of grandeur to Nicosia which Shiraz cannot emulate.

I entered the city by the gate of Larnica, and was conducted to the episcopal palace through a number of narrow lanes, where my horse was nearly buried in mud and filth. The Archbishop, dressed in a magnificent purple robe, with a long flowing beard, and a silk cap on his head, received me in the vestibule, and ordered an apartment to be prepared for me in the palace, a large and straggling building, containing upwards of a hundred chambers. These are all required for the accommodation of the bishops, priests, and their attendants; for the Archbishop, both in power and affluence, is the second personage on the island. All affairs connected with the Greeks are under his immediate cognizance and management; and consequently when the Governor is desirous of making a new arrangement regarding that class, or of levying contributions, he has recourse to the Archbishop, who has lately usurped the whole authority, and seldom even deigns to consult the dragoman. From the humble situation of an obscure deacon he raised himself, by extraordinary means, to the episcopacy: he borrowed immense sums of money from the rich, which he lavished on the poor; securing in this manner the votes of his creditors, that they might be repaid, and those of the others in expectation of future reward. He pressed me to remain with him for a short time, promising on this condition that he would procure the Mutesellim's boat to transport me from Cerina to Kelendri; and as he was prepossessing in his manners, and far superior to the generality of Greek priests, I consented to postpone my departure for a couple of days. At seven o'clock supper being announced, he took me by the hand, and led me through a gallery into the refectory, a long and dirty hall: about thirty priests and bishops sat down to table. The wine and provisions were excellent and abundant, and the bread which was white as snow, and baked with milk instead of water, was the best I remember to have tasted.

During my stay at Nicosia I visited everything worthy the attention of a traveller; amongst the rest the cathedrals of St Sophia, St Nicolas, St Catherine and St Dominique: the former is a handsome Gothic structure, but the others are small, and do not merit any particular description. Three of them are now mosques; that of St Nicolas is converted into the Bezistan, and that of St Dominique contains the tombs of many princes of the house of Lusignan, who held their court at Nicosia. The Mutesellim resides in the ancient palace of the Kings of Cyprus; but it is now so much altered and disfigured, that it is not possible to form any idea of its original appearance: the gate is however entire, and over the arch, in basso relievo, is the figure of a griffin, the crest, I believe, of Lusignan. From the palace I directed my course to the ramparts, round which I walked in about an hour and a quarter; they are built, or probably only faced, with hewn stone, flanked with large oblong bastions: