

In some ways they played delightfully, as if full of the spirit of the early, adventurous hour. But along with this elation I was conscious of a rising anxiety as to what was going to happen to me before the day was over. I was, on arriving, to be the guest of the Chief Secretary, who lived in Nicosia, the immemorial seat of government ; and so far as kindness went I was sure of a kind welcome : but as I neared the island I began to realise keenly how very little I, after all, knew about it, and to ask myself if in coming to it I had not been a fool for my pains.

As an island of the imagination in the world of fable and history I could have recited a roll of magnificent names connected with it—antique Egypt and Hellas, luxurious Rome, Byzantium, and crusading Europe ; or, again, Adonis, who was wooed on its sloping hillsides ; Balaam and Ezekiel, who sang of its power and riches ; Solomon and Alexander the Great, St. Paul and St. George the dragon-slayer, Catharine Cornaro of Venice, and the conquering Sultan Selim. The mere catalogue would have come to the ear like a passage out of ‘Paradise Lost.’ But as for the dates and details which underlay all these associations, my knowledge, I now found, was forlornly less than fragmentary. And what sort of present remained after all this past ? My knowledge of this was more inappreciable still. Six weeks ago I was not even aware of the existence of the city in which I should sleep that night—this obscure capital, Nicosia, hidden away far inland, and full, as I had learnt already, of