

The explanation of these barbarities was as follows. Cyprus was at that time under the rule of a certain Isaac Comnenus, who had lately tried in Armenia to make an independent king of himself, and, failing, had fled to Cyprus. Here he was more successful. He arrived armed with some forged imperial letters, on the strength of which he was accepted as duke or governor. He at once set himself to wring, by taxes or otherwise, whatever treasure he could from his new subjects. By means of this he surrounded himself with a powerful band of mercenaries; and he presently felt himself strong enough to proclaim himself emperor of Cyprus, openly defying his imperial sovereign at Constantinople. He had already quarrelled with the crusaders in Asia Minor, and was jealous of the ease with which, in Cyprus, they had hitherto obtained provisions. He began, therefore, by subjecting them to all sorts of extortionate duties, and at length ventured to say bluntly that he would not for the future allow them even to land. As to the shipwrecked sailors, for whose landing the storm was responsible, he would do nothing for them beyond keeping them still in prison; but as to the Princess Berengaria, on reflection he changed his mind.

It suddenly occurred to him that it would be a magnificent stroke of state-craft to entice her on shore, secure her, and get for her some great ransom. Accordingly on the day following his first insulting message, he sent her another which was accompanied by presents and provisions, explaining away his dis-